swerv

culture & community

FREE

December 2008

PREMIER LITERARY ISSUE

fire & ink

A WRITERS FESTIVAL FOR GLBT PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Fire & Ink III: Cotillion

Writers and readers and lovers of the work of LGBTQ writers of African descent take note

Shake out your finest words.
Get ready to shimmy 'til your line breaks.

Fire & Ink III: Cotillion is almost here!
October 8-11, 2009
Austin, Texas

Find out more at:
2009.fireandink.org

Supported by
the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice,
allgo and the University of Texas at Austin
Center for African African American Studies

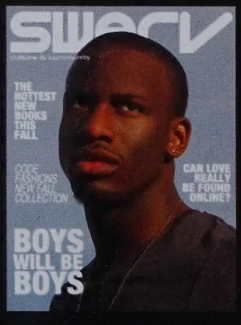
allgo

CAAS

Don't Miss an Issue of

SWERV

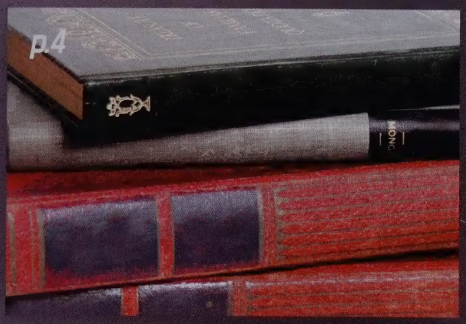
Visit www.SWERVmag.com to find out where to get your free copy and to subscribe!



©2008 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

contents

WINTER 2008



FEATURES

CARRYING THE WORDS 4
Literary Leaders. Words by Clarence* J. Fluker

CRACKING THE CODE 19
The newest garments from Cöd Fashions

DEPARTMENTS

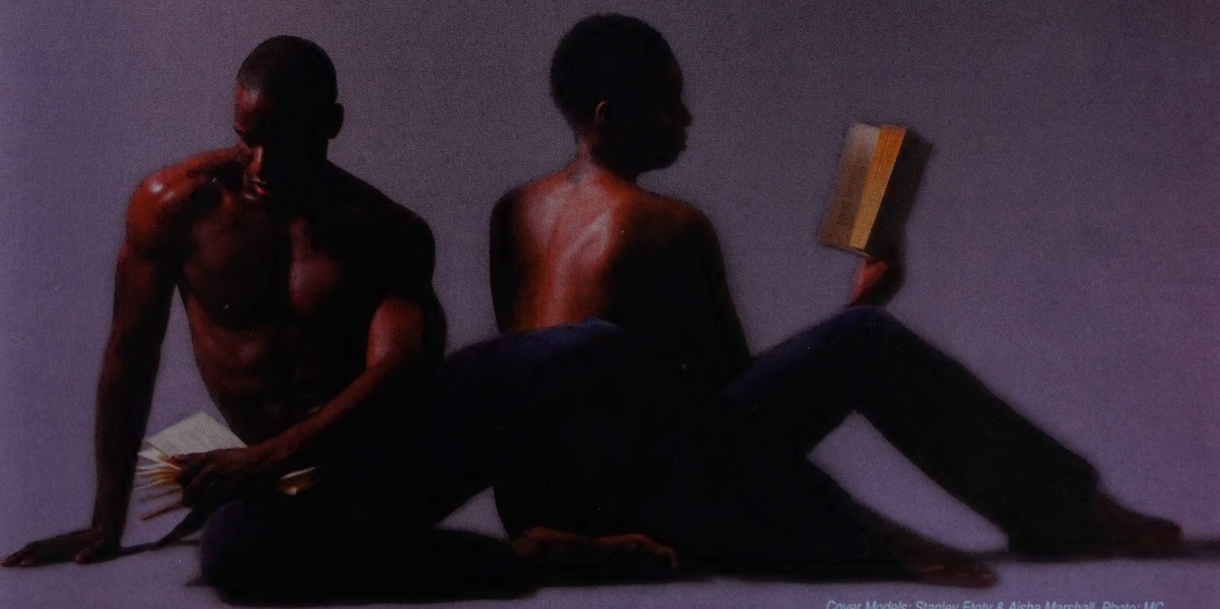
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR 3
Welcome from Editor-in-Chief, Michael-Christopher

MUSIC 13
Review of the new Tim'm West joint by L. Michael Gipson

FITNESS 18
Workin' it out with Jamil Fletcher

HEALTH 26
World AIDS Day reflections by Frank J. Oldham, Jr. and more!

EVENTS FOR US 28
Do something!



Cover Models: Stanley Etoty & Aisha Marshall. Photo: MC

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com

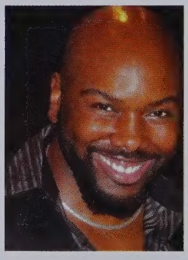
MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR

JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE: RIVENDALE MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

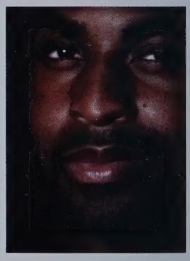
contributors



L. Michael Gipson is a Washington, D.C.-based cultural critic, community health planner and award-winning youth advocate. His sociopolitical essays have been published in two anthologies, including *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* (Chester Hartman, ed.). As a cultural critic and music journalist, Gipson's work has appeared in *Clik, Pulse, Arise, Pride, Amplify, Urban Dialect, Port of Harlem* and *Creative Loafing ATL*. He is editor and columnist at www.SoulTracks.com and heard weekly as "Cornfed" on *The Dave Brown Radio Show*.

Frank J. Oldham, Jr. is the President & CEO of the National Association of People with AIDS. Find your local testing site at the National Association of People with AIDS web site, www.napwa.org, or at www.hivtest.org.

Kevin Anderson, a Los Angeles native, is an Intervention Coordinator for St. Hope Foundation's Fusion program in Houston, TX, where he now resides. Anderson is the founder and lead facilitator for Brother2Brother Gathering and Book Club for same-gender-loving brothers to discuss issues important to the community, while strengthening each other through fellowship and laughter. Anderson is also a founding member of Purpose Driven Lives, Inc., dedicated to enhancing the lives of those in need through fundraising and education.

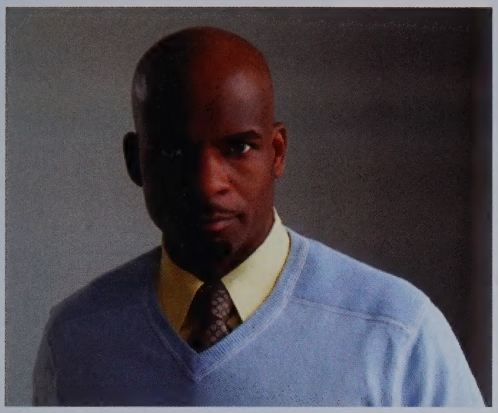


Clarence* J. Fluker writes about what is on his heart and what is going on in the world around it. At times, that is an awful lot but he has managed to present it clearly as a playwright in his one-man show *LOVE*, as a contributor to the anthology *Spirited*, as an editor of *ARISE Magazine* and a guest writer for *IMPACT Monthly*. Words make him dance and dancing makes him happy.

Justin B. Smith, 28, has been involved in gay activism since 1999. A U.S. Air Force veteran, Smith was born and raised in Silver Spring, MD, and now lives in Baltimore. He has worked with and for gay organizations such as the National Black Justice Coalition, Human Rights Campaign, Equality Maryland, and Us Helping Us, People Into Living Incorporated. Smith is currently in school pursuing a degree in journalism.

Photo: Don Harris

From the Publishers



Inspiration can come from a multitude of sources; a song, a sermon, a speech or a story. It's astonishing how a simple word or thought is capable of giving birth to new concepts and ideas. Inspiration can even come from things that aren't so encouraging. As an African American I know all too well how oppressive situations can mobilize many to the aid of others or one's self. As a writer, artist and publisher, one of the things that inspires me most is my community.

I belong to two, often conflicting, groups. I am black and I am same-gender-loving. There is never a moment in my life when I feel one identity is more dominant than the other, but we live in a time when some people feel it's easier to assimilate into hetero-normal culture than stand up for what is in our hearts.

Although same-gender-loving people have a distinctly different journey, some feel sexuality does not warrant celebration, and therefore remain private about their orientation. Still, there are a few strong voices calling out from the masses, eager to document stories, songs and visions that speak to both cultures. Many times, those inspired voices go unheard by individuals who don't believe they're as legitimate as the voices of our straight counterparts. This magazine will hear those voices and raise them higher.

In my travels as an author, I've come across people who do amazing things: writers, musicians, singers, artists, photographers, activists—the list goes on. Meeting these people has been a blessing, and the camaraderie and collaborations that have resulted have motivated us all. Still, we've all struggled, at times, to reach the eyes and ears of the people we're speaking to, and about. SWERV is dedicating its pages to help these voices be heard.

It's my hope that SWERV will inspire those who may have given up on an idea or dream because it was linked to their sexual orientation. I intend to help those who are already doing great things in and for our community, to help them reach more, eager eyes. With that, we present to you our Premier Literary Issue. Please let us know what you think. E-mail us at info@swervmag.com and let us know how we're doing, who we need to feature and how you've been inspired.

Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

To swerve is to turn aside from a straight course. SWERV magazine represents a turn from the usual, a movement against the grain, an alternative to the norm. SWERV represents the voice of African-American members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, a population that often turns aside from both mainstream African Americans and the larger LGBT community.

The challenge to have one's voice heard is even more complicated when from within subcultures that are often marginalized. To be black in America is one thing, but to also be openly gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual is another. While the recent election of the first African-American president is undoubtedly historic, it does not dismiss the challenges black people face in this country. Whether it is poverty, unemployment, incarceration, illiteracy or HIV/AIDS infections, blacks are disproportionately affected by the ills of our society.

The recent votes against gay marriage clearly indicate that this country's society, for all of its greatness, has yet to truly come to terms with homosexuality. Laws are still on the books that prevent LGBT people from openly serving in the military, and the level of targeted hate crimes against gays and lesbians continues to persist. Clearly, there is still work to be done.

SWERV magazine celebrates both the culture and community of this unique demographic of African-American lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people. Our pages will introduce you to extraordinary people doing phenomenal things in the worlds of literature, music, fashion, health, politics, sports and beyond.

Welcome to the world of SWERV.

Jamil Fletcher
Co-publisher

CARRYING THE WORDS

by Clarence* J. Fluker

Register Your Book Club with SWERV at info@SWERVmag.com

On the landscape of the written word there lies a unique space. This space, though small in magnitude, is magnificent and gives life and light to the pleasure, power and pain of the human experience. It has been ever-growing since its conception and continues to organically evolve. It is this unique space that represents the history, past and present, of black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender writing and publishing.

Beginning in the 1920s with the Harlem Renaissance-spawned magazine, *Fire!*, to the works of James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Essex Hemphill, E. Lynn Harris and James Earl Hardy, black same-gender-loving people have been telling their stories despite attempts to silence their voices. Until more recent times, a novel about two men or two women in an intimate or sexual relationship would not have been tolerated. Code and heavy implication were common literary devices used to mask the truth.

Thankfully, we are at a point in time in our history where we are free to express our love, lust and longings in most any way we choose. The way has been paved so that we are able to educate and entertain not only ourselves, but also our heterosexual family and friends, through the power of publishing and writing—telling our own stories, in our own voices.

Twenty-first Century technology and the Internet have played a huge role in granting almost anyone the opportunity and power to publish their own work without the approval or backing of a major publishing company or literary agent. In the past ten years or so, the floodgates have burst open, the result being a tidal wave of literature that bathes us in stories, language and traditions of our shared community and humanity. No longer are we limited to being constructed and defined by heterosexual and/or non-people of color depictions of what it is to be black and same-gender-loving. Gone are the days of the one-dimensional black gay character. Today, we live and write our own narratives that tell of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender African Americans that are as varied as the shades of our skin.

Yet as the wave of literature grows wider and deeper, there is still very little space on many bookshelves for stories of same-gender love. Despite a growing awareness, and because of bigotry and other obstacles, a good number of LGBT authors have had to go it alone and publish their own works, and many of these authors have persevered and managed to build a gorgeous body of writing. Others have found a home in smaller publishers. Although they are not household names like Harris and Hardy, these authors are just as deserving of their praise and notoriety.

As you read about the following writers, some new, some familiar, realize that these are the current carriers of the word; those responsible for continuing our written legacy, keeping and growing our unique space on the literary landscape. Get to know these authors and support them, as they are our shared experiences and voices. Read on and get carried away!

LAURINDA D. BROWN

"I write about life...not lifestyles. With each literary offering, I try very hard to be different and present situations to which we all can relate. I also try to educate as well as entertain new readers so they can dismiss the initial fear of reading literature that represents a different segment of our culture. I stopped aiming to please everyone with my writing because not everyone is going to like what I have to say or how I choose to say it. My ultimate goal with any piece is to leave the reader wanting more."

Fire & Brimstone
Undercover
Walk Like a Man
Strapped
The Highest Price for Passion
Purple Panties (contributor)
The Cat House

www.myspace.com/laurindadbrown

G. WINSTON JAMES

"Trebor Healey, a Lambda Literary Award-winning author, said of my work, 'James explores in vivid, raw, disturbing detail the gritty realities of gay black life. These are stories that need to be heard, and that shockingly even 40 years into the gay movement are still being silenced, ignored or overlooked.'

"I am inspired by the words that go unspoken in our conversations, and believe as Lauryn Hill does that 'fantasy is what people want, but reality is what they need.' For that reason my work deals very unapologetically with sex and sexuality, identity and all the complexities that accompany them.

"My goals as a writer are to be original in my approaches and to leave readers with questions about themselves and the world around them."

Lyric
The Damaged Good
Voices Rising (co-editor)
Spirited (co-editor)
Shaming the Devil (forthcoming)

www.gwinstonjames.com

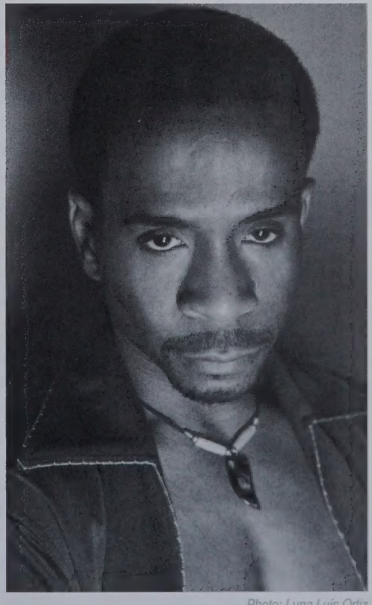
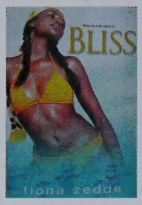
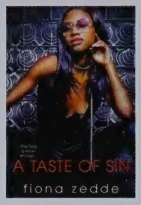
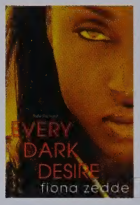


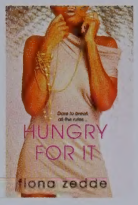
Photo: Luna Luis Ortiz

FIONA ZEDDE









"I hope that I tell stories people like me can relate to, stories that speak to an experience that a lot of fiction out there does not—or at least did not until very recently. And that experience is that of an immigrant, lesbian woman working at tying two sometimes clashing cultures together in a way that makes sense and makes for a happy and ecstatic life. I want my writing to show that. Stylistically, my fiction is a mixture of the old-fashioned (in terms of diction and theme) and the visceral. By that, I mean my work is heavily emotional. It digs into the heart of my characters and (hopefully) calls out emotion from the reader as well. I want it to be poetic (about flowers and rain and the breeze) but I also want it to feel very raw.

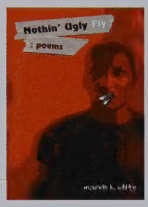
"My purpose in writing has always been to tell the truth about the lives of (some) lesbian women. And that truth is tied to my goal of wanting to connect with other women through the stories I create."

Bliss
A Taste of Sin
Every Dark Desire
Hungry For It

www.fionazedde.com

MARVIN K. WHITE

Author of the Lambda Literary Award-nominated collections of poetry *last rights* and *nothin' ugly fly*, is a poet, performer, playwright, visual artist as well as a community arts organizer. His poetry has been anthologized in *The Road Before Us: 100 Black Gay Poets*; *My Brother's Keeper*; *Gents, Bad Boys and Barbarians: New Gay Writing*, *Things Shaped in Passing*; *Sojourner: Writing in the Age of AIDS*; *Bum Rush the Page*; *Role Call*; and *Think Again*; as well as other local and national publications. A former member of the critically acclaimed Pomo Afro Homos, he has led creative arts and writing workshops from inner city elementary schools to youth centers for runaway kids to black gay youth support groups. White holds a fellowship in the national African-American poetry organization, Cave Canem; sits on the board of Fire & Ink, a national black LGBT writers organization; and is co-founder of B/GLAM (Black Gay Letters and Arts Movement), a Bay Area, California, organization whose goal is to preserve, present and incubate black gay artistic expressions.



last rights
nothin' ugly fly
Our Name Be Witness (Spring 2009)

www.marvinkwhite.com

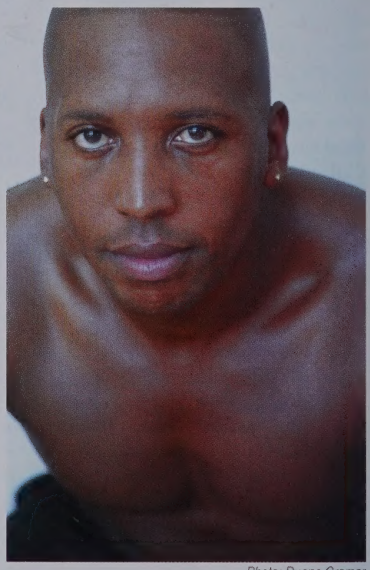


Photo: Duane Cramer

SAMIYA BASHIR

"My writing is about survival, resistance, healing and delicious joy. Poetry forces clarity. It cuts through the bullshit and layers of fatty tissue that we use to buffer us from actual feelings, observations, knowledge and experience. My work is my first and last love affair and poetry in particular has saved my life time and again; it's reminded me that my life is worth saving, so get off my ass and get to it. I'm very much such a Scorpio. Life. Death. Resurrection. Repeat. Shedding. Each book is like shedding a new skin, and coming out shiny, glistening, moist and new. Each new one a lesson in how to be light and flame in a way that doesn't burn."

Where the Apple Falls
Gospel (Spring 2009)

www.samiyabashir.com

Photo: Duane Cramer

STEVEN G. FULLWOOD

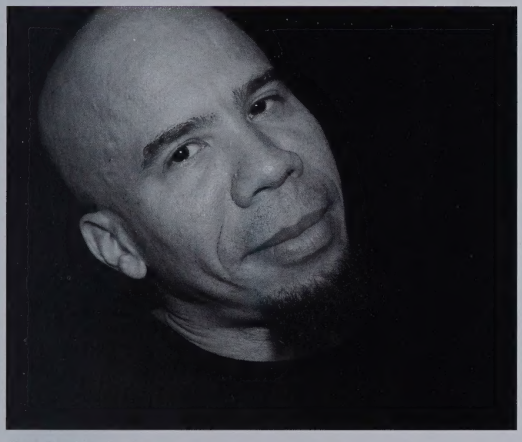
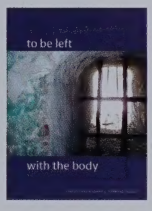
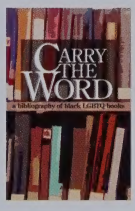


Photo: Donald Andew Agarrat





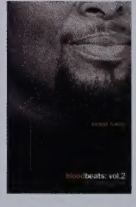
"My goal is to say something that is entertaining and 'true.' I write about whatever moves me. Although I primarily write about myself, I thrive on recording the voices of others. Essentially, I am telling one story—about you and me, what we do, and the sweet tension that keeps us loving and killing one another."

Funny
To Be Left with the Body (co-editor)
Carry the Word (co-editor)

www.stevengfullwood.com

ERNEST HARDY

Writing from a critical center that's melanin-based/feminist/pro-queer/unabashedly-leftist, L.A.-based writer Ernest Hardy pens essays, interviews and reviews whose subject matter ranges from underground hip-hop and American indie film to modern French cinema, from revealing interviews with Warren Beatty, Meshell NdegeOcello and Les Nubians to essays on gay rappers, queer rap audiences, and gay hip-hop porn, all pushing beyond clichés of the media-stoked "down-low" phenomenon. He's a Sundance Fellow whose work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe*, the *L.A. Times*, the *LA Weekly* and more.



Blood Beats: Vol. 1 / demos, remixes & extended versions
Blood Beats: Vol. 2 / the bootleg joints

www.ernesthardy.com

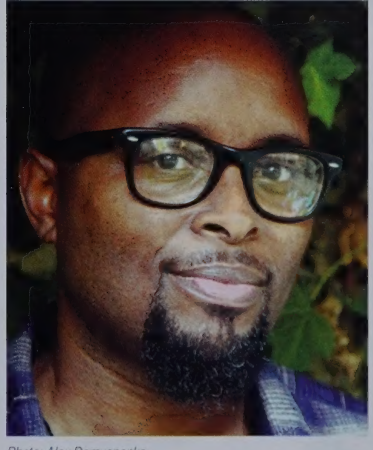


Photo: Alex Demyanenko

Photo: David E.F.P

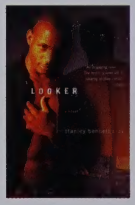
TIM'M T. WEST

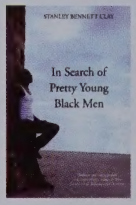
"It is my aspiration to eventually publish an array of work steeped in the spirit and passion of those who understand, as Audre Lorde so poignantly suggested, that 'poetry is not a luxury.' When I wrote my first book, Red Dirt Revival, *back in 2003, I was doing so with the urgency of someone who found courage to speak my truth in order to save, not just my life, but that of others. Since that time, I've produced another book,* Flirting, *as well as another small collection,* BARE. *So many of my brothas and sistahs died attempting visibility and affirmation, not just as black people or LGBT people, but as people fully seeking full reverence of their humanity. Being an independent publisher has not been easy, but each book I've written is a gift you give to yourself and supports the creation of new work. There is certainly more to come... by me, and those brave comrades who'll seek my guidance in offering the world their voice."*

Red Dirt Revival
BARE
Flirting

www.reddirt.biz

STANLEY BENNETT CLAY





"How does one articulate the poetry of life? That is the welcomed conundrum that for parts of five decades as a published writer guides my pen to paper. There are so many stories out there to be told, but they are essentially rooted in one universal story that, I'm afraid, I'm not smart enough to thoroughly define.

"But I do know that it has something to do with being born, learning, living, loving, and leaving something of yourself as part of this great multicolored fabric, and then moving on to that next new unknown universe, made holy and eye-popping and infinitely simple because it IS new and unknown.

"It's all a wonderful tomorrow, new and Unknown. And with that prospect I write. I write with a poet's respect for coming upon things that educate me and I humbly articulate it with the best words that I can find, which often turn out to be the simplest words meticulously arranged to give reverence to the universe, which is giving reverence to God.

"I would never offer God dirty fruit. I will wash it and polish it and examine it and test it before I give it up to My Lord. When I write, I try and make sure my offering to Him is as worthy an offering that can be offered by one of His perfect imperfect sons. I want to honor him with the melody.

"Anyone can write a story. Few can sing it."

In Search of Pretty Young Black Men
Looker

www.myspace.com/stanleybennettclay

does your mama know?

An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories

Edited By Lisa C. Moore

By turns funny, passionate, angry and joyous, does your mama know? *reflects the complexity of emotions that accompany a black lesbian's coming out. These short stories, poems, interviews and essays—fiction and nonfiction—make up a powerful collection of original and new writing.*

"These voices [in *does your mama know?*] *are varied as are the tales they tell. Haitian, Jamerican, Afro-Canadian, biracial, Southern U.S., London by way of Barbados. Ages 14 to 90. ...It is extremely rare to see a book of any kind that reflects the diversity of black people in North America."*
—R. Erica Doyle,
Women in the Life *magazine*

"Few such voices have been raised to sing the history of African-American lesbians. Editor Lisa C. Moore noticed that and has set about to correct the omission, and she has done a masterful job of it."
—Dale Edwyna Smith,
Lesbian Review of Books

10TH ANNIVERSARY EXPANDED EDITION

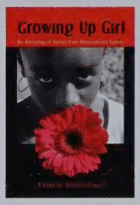
WITH NEW STORIES, COMING FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

does your mama know?
An Anthology of Black Lesbian
Coming Out Stories
Edited by Lisa C. Moore
Cover art © 1997 by Kamela Eaton
$19.95 paperback
RedBone Press
ISBN- 10 0-9786251-6-1
ISBN-13 978-0-9786251-6-0

REDBONE PRESS

Order through your local independent bookseller, or contact: RedBone Press
P.O. Box 15571 / Washington, DC 20003 p: 202-667-0392 / f: 301-559-5239

MICHELLE SEWELL

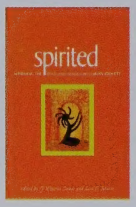


"I can not sing, or play an instrument, or draw a straight line, so I write. Writing is the most effective and consistent way that I have found to express my ideas and thoughts. Over the years, I have endeavored to develop a style that I hope feels authentic and accessible. It is not my intent to put the reader through the wringer to fully appreciate or grasp what I am saying. I consider it a compliment when a reader tells me that they feel like I am speaking to them directly and that I have captured some important life experience in a simple stanza or phrasing. I write because I don't want to do anything else."

Growing Up Girl (editor)
Just Like a Girl (editor)

www.growingupgirl.com

LISA C. MOORE



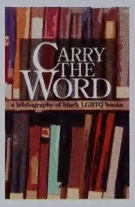


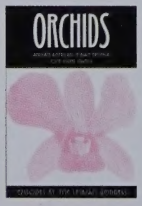
Photo: Ocean Morrisett

Lisa C. Moore is the founder and editor of RedBone Press, which publishes work celebrating the culture of black lesbians and gay men and promoting understanding between black gays and lesbians and the black mainstream. RedBone Press has 15 titles in print, including the new edition of *does your mama know? An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories*, as well as the best-selling book of essays by black gay men and lesbians on religion and spirituality, *Spirited*. Moore looks for work that is smart, engaging and innovative; as she says, "a manuscript has to grab me. I only publish what I fall in love with."

does your mama know? (editor)
Spirited (co-editor)
Carry the Word (co-editor)

www.redbonepress.com

KIMBERLY Q. - THE LESBIAN GODDESS



"I felt that there were no real 'get to the heart of the matter' stories for women of color without being vulgar or tasteless. Erotica is about the journey and the desire to obtain that ecstasy by enticing and seducing, which is how I write. My goal is to provide women with outlets that provide them the fantasy (or reality) of reliving and/or desiring that moment; to go beyond the realm of women's comfort zones and normalcy by providing them with exotic adventures, unexplained pleasures and inexplicable desires."

Orchids: African-American Lesbian Erotica One-Night Stands
Orchids II: Reality or Fantasy

www.womenofchoice.com

NIKKI RASHAN

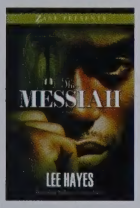
"I wrote Double Pleasure Double Pain *in an effort to reach out to women who are or know someone facing challenges similar to that of my main character, Kyla. In the story, Kyla finds herself attracted to another woman for the first time and must deal with both the excitement and confusion that comes with that experience. Some of the story is loosely based upon some of my own feelings coming out in my twenties; however, the major difference is that I've felt a connection to women my whole life while Kyla's experience is new.*

"My style of writing is conversational and easy to read; I once described it as a long, personal e-mail to a friend. The reader gets a firsthand look into Kyla's thoughts as she speaks with her friends and interacts with her new love interest. Responses from readers reveal that they are truly entertained by Kyla's humor and touched by the struggles she encounters. You Make Me Wanna, *the sequel, will be released in 2009."*

Double Pleasure Double Pain
You Make Me Wanna (2009)

www.nikkirashan.com

LEE HAYES

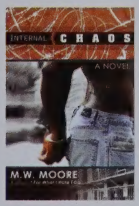


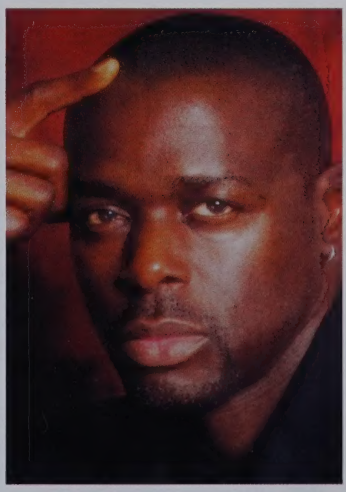
Lee Hayes understands and truly believes in the exceptional and profound power of words to delight, to heal, to entertain as well as to elicit change in lives of readers. It is his sincere hope that by reading his words that people will come to understand that actions yield real consequences which will affect their lives for better or for worse. He hopes that we all choose wisely. He also hopes that readers realize the innate value of their existence and that they dare dream to become more than they ever thought possible.

Passion Marks
A Deeper Blue: Passion Marks II
The Messiah
Flesh to Flesh: An Erotic Anthology (editor)

www.leehayes.info

M.W. MOORE



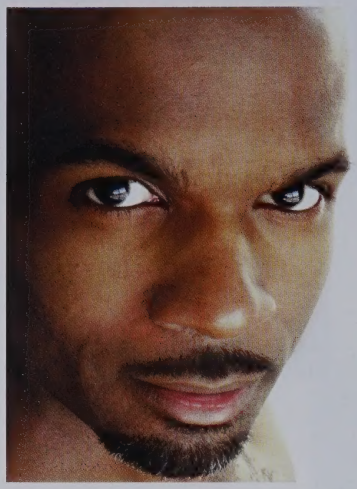


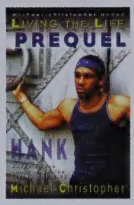
"I started writing as therapy. When I concluded writing to confront my behaviors, For What I Hate I Do *was [the result]. I did not want the book to be another typical novel about drugs and sex, but a fact-based novel that would confront and expose addictive behaviors. Now it's a movement. I was compelled to expose the ugly side of destructive behaviors because I once pretended those actions were normal. I self-medicated to become disconnected to the hurt, shame and damaged emotions I had inflicted on my bodily temple and on others. My work is an analogy unveiling the ugliness of destructive behaviors that deceived me with offers of pleasure without penalty. Even in this day of the DL lifestyle and HIV/AIDS crisis many still pretend that those issues don't exist, so I had to confront those terrors."*

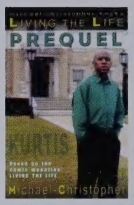
For What I Hate I Do
Internal Chaos

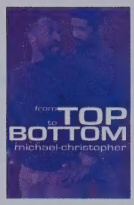
www.mwmoore.com

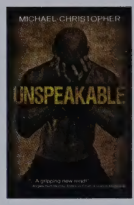
MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER











"At an author's panel, host Stanley Bennett Clay once dubbed me 'the black gay romance novelist.' As someone who values relationships, I accepted the moniker with pride. After I started writing, designing and illustrating HIV prevention comics and campaigns in 2001, I decided to approach my writing from a slightly different angle. After examining the obstacles we set before us while seeking out and building relationships (sexual positioning, HIV status, masculinity, etc.), I took on the challenge of tearing down those walls at their foundation. It is my hope that my writing will assist readers in making more positive choices, treating their loved ones with the respect they deserve and coming into a place of genuine acceptance and love."

Living the Life Prequel - Hank
Living the Life Prequel - Kurtis
From Top to Bottom
Unspeakable

www.michael-christopher.com

The inspiration for this article came from a very ambitious and much needed publication that you may have noticed in prior pages. *Carry the Word: A Bibliography of Black LGBTQ Books*, was compiled by three literary torchbearers, Steven G. Fullwood, Reginald Harris and Lisa C. Moore. Harris is the author of *10 Tongues*; contributor to *Voices Rising: Celebrating 20 Years of Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writing*, and is a Lambda Literary Award finalist. He, Fullwood and Moore also share another affiliation: They are all part of the leadership of Fire & Ink, an organization devoted to increasing the visibility and awareness of the works of LGBT writers of African descent and heritage.

More importantly, all proceeds from sales of *Carry the Word* will benefit the Fire & Ink organization and its conference, Fire & Ink III: Cotillion, to be held in Austin, TX, October 8-11, 2009. "Cotillion" will bring together hundreds of writers whose work spans the genres, including: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, playwriting, multimedia arts, performance arts. Attendees will include writers, editors, publishers, scholars, curators, audio and visual artists, students, teachers, thinkers, media professionals, readers and art lovers from diverse backgrounds and of diverse interests from around the country. For more information visit www.fireandink.org.

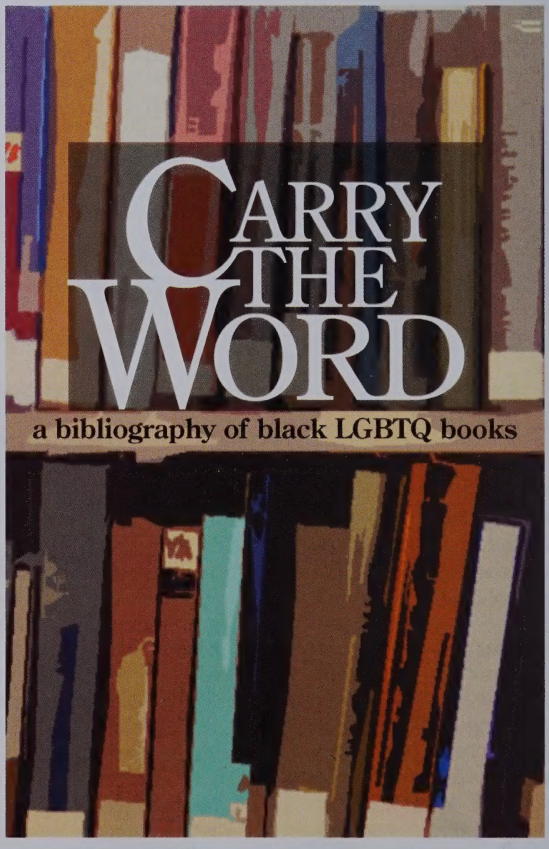
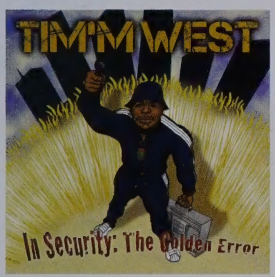


Photo: katina parker

TIM'M WEST
In Security: The Golden Error

by L. Michael Gipson



Tim'm T. West is red dirt born, but possesses the defensive swagger of cold Northern streets. His Timbs, hoodies and baggy jeans reek of stereotypes lived and feared; yet his undergraduate degree from Duke and double master's degrees from Stanford and the New School, respectively, belie every black male statistic ever imposed upon his brethren. He is ill with an incurable disease, but is a picturesque embodiment of athletic health and confidence. He is an out gay man whose truth, when spoken aloud, is usually met with disbelief and protestations; out gay men don't present like Mr. West, DL men do. He is a battle rapper. He has devoted his life to education and community uplift.

To say that Tim'm West is a man of deep contradictions is like saying Sarah Palin needs classes in geography and constitutional law. Yet with his cool demeanor it is easy to assume that this co-founder of the Deep Dickollective (D/DC), a pioneering gay hip-hop group, is a man who has made peace with his contradictions. Listening to Tim'm spit verse on "Walking Contradiction" off his third hip-hop project, *In Security: The Golden Error*, one could believe he has achieved an Obama-like zen. But between the swaggering poetic lines in *In Security* is a world of complicated, intense struggle for reconciliation of oppositional halves.

Tim'm's music represents the man; both typical and atypical of a brand we presume to know, but complex in a way we cannot know. Hip-hop and liberal black men resist single-dimensionality, straddling the progressive and traditional. They spit inspirations, but often fall into the oppressive, habitual privileges of old. That Tim'm, a leftist philosopher, chooses to tackle a medium whose repressive calls have failed lesser respondents proves a bold, if dicey move. Listening to Tim'm's artistic tensions begs the question: Can hip-hop's rules live harmoniously with philosophical social uplift? Consistent with "conscious rap," Tim'm's admirable work on *In Security* says "yes"...and "no." Even Tim'm gives in to temptation when taunted or to maintain tradition.

Appropriately, yesterday's pull is a running theme on *In Security*, particularly on knowing jams like "'80s babies" and "Old School." The Members Only era is also referenced through spare production and the privileging of lyric over beats, signatures of his previous works like *BlakkBoy Blue(s)*. Tim'm's impressive flow also reaches back to a time when relaxed rappers proved points with articulate cleverness rather than speed and grunts.

Using old way cadence, he spits new way consciousness. Rich with the genre's braggadocio, Tim'm's Kurtis Blow-baritone glides across complicated bass lines spitting liberation rhymes on everything from politics to same-sex lives. Like KRS-One—to whom Tim'm is often compared—progressive sentiments and educational lessons abound on soulful cuts like "Nappy." And he tackles obscure subjects with eloquence and sensitivity, such as on "Stutter," reflecting his speech-challenged childhood, and "Full Moon," about the love-challenged man he's become.

Yet, when cornered by an underwhelming, homophobic rapper who dissed Tim'm on a dismissible mixtape track, Tim'm's response on "Alone Again" is to pick up regressive tools of taunting humiliation in a decidedly testicular fashion. That Tim'm attacks his foe with intellectual quips in between fat jokes fails to remove the sting of his word choices. It is disheartening to hear a brotha who celebrates brothers of size in his love and poetry use the very thorns piercing those men's sides, even in defense of his wounded pride and ours. It is also very telling that I, a king-size brother, initially reacted with applause when hearing Tim'm competently defend himself and his community in ways respected by other men, other patriarchs. "You tell 'em, Tim'm; we ain't yo punks, bitch," I thought with a swelled chest, figuratively pounding my brother's back, ignoring how he chose to have ours.

Sobriety came through repetitive listening. Why was I proud of Tim'm's rebuttal? Because he proves we can brandish their weapons with the same dexterity? Because we can hurt them the same way they hurt us? Tim'm's art reveals truths about our heart, our struggle, our contradictions, our better selves and the work that remains. In its honesty, *In Security* leaves uneasy questions in its fist-pumping wake.

USE OF TRUVADA:

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor and combines EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate [DF]) in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat adults with HIV-1 infection.

TRUVADA should not be used with ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir DF 300 mg), VIREAD®, EMTRIVA®, Combivir® (lamivudine/zidovudine), Epivir® or Epivir-HBV® (lamivudine), Epzicom® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), or Trizivir® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine).

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of the following side effects or conditions while taking TRUVADA:

- **Nausea, vomiting, unusual muscle pain, and/or weakness. These may be signs of a buildup of acid in the blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious medical condition**
- **Light colored stools, dark colored urine, and/or if your skin or the whites of your eyes turn yellow. These may be signs of serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity), with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly), and fat in the liver (steatosis)**
- **If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B virus (HBV) and stop taking TRUVADA, your liver disease may suddenly get worse. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months**
- If you have had kidney problems or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys
- It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA causes damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, talk to your healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA

Changes in body fat have been seen in some people taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines.

The most common side effects of the medicines in TRUVADA when taken with other anti-HIV-1 medicines are diarrhea, nausea, fatigue, sinusitis, upper respiratory tract infections, nasopharyngitis, headache, dizziness, depression, insomnia, abnormal dreams, and rash. Skin discoloration (spots and freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

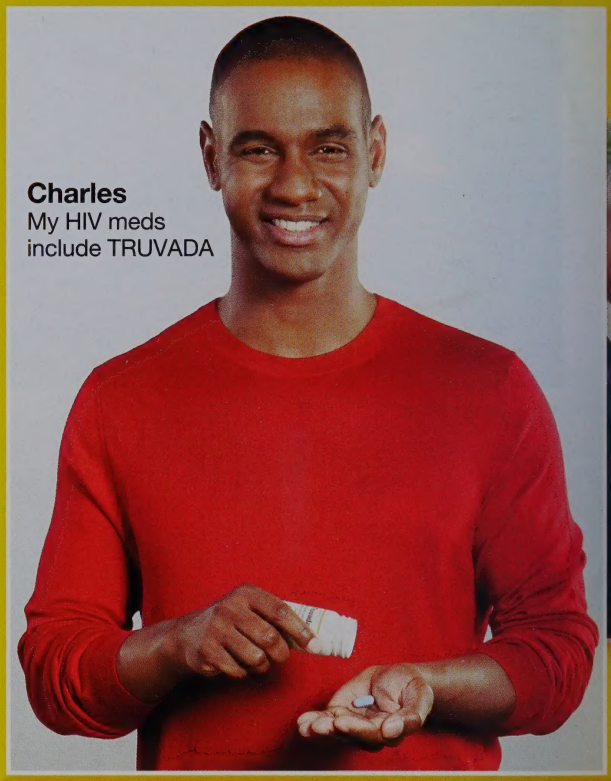
Discuss all medicines you take with your healthcare provider and be aware:

- Your healthcare provider may need to follow you more closely or adjust your therapy if you are taking Videx® or Videx® EC (didanosine), Reyataz® (atazanavir sulfate), or Kaletra® (lopinavir/ritonavir) with TRUVADA

Please see Patient Information on next page, including **"What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"** in the Patient Information section.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

I feel positive



In combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults

References: 1. Based on data from PHAST retail monthly data; September 2005-January 2008; Wolters Kluwer Health. **2.** Truvada [prescribing information]. Foster City, CA: Gilead Sciences, Inc.; May 2008.

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, and VIREAD are trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc.
ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC.
All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

GILEAD
© 2008 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT0450 7/08

#1 prescribed HIV med by doctors[1]

about my future. TRUVADA helps make it possible.

Individual results may vary.

With *once a day* TRUVADA for my HIV, I can plan for long-term success.

- Proven over the long term to reduce viral load to undetectable (<400 copies/mL) and increase CD4 cell count in 3 years of a clinical study*[2]
- Established long-term safety and tolerability*[2]

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

Ask your doctor about TRUVADA and go to www.TRUVADA.com.

Truvada®

200 mg emtricitabine · tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg

Think long term.* Starting now.

*Through 3 years in Gilead Study 934.[2]

Patient Information

TRUVADA® (tru-VAH-dah) tablets

Generic name: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
(em tri SIT uh bean and te NOE' fo veer
dye soe PROX il FYOU mar ate)

Read the Patient Information that comes with TRUVADA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. You should stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA. **Do not change or stop your medicine without first talking with your healthcare provider.** Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about TRUVADA.

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?

- **Some people who have taken medicine like TRUVADA (nucleoside analogs) have developed a serious condition called lactic acidosis** (build up of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of lactic acidosis.**
  - You feel very weak or tired.
  - You have unusual (not normal) muscle pain.
  - You have trouble breathing.
  - You have stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
  - You feel cold, especially in your arms and legs.
  - You feel dizzy or lightheaded.
  - You have a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Some people who have taken medicines like TRUVADA have developed serious liver problems called hepatotoxicity,** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of liver problems.**
  - Your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice).
  - Your urine turns dark.
  - Your bowel movements (stools) turn light in color.
  - You don't feel like eating food for several days or longer.
  - You feel sick to your stomach (nausea).
  - You have lower stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking nucleoside analog medicines, like TRUVADA, for a long time.
- **If you are also infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV),** you need close medical follow-up for several months after stopping treatment with TRUVADA. Follow-up includes medical exams and blood tests to check for HBV that could be getting worse. **Patients with Hepatitis B Virus infection, who take TRUVADA and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. A "flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before.**

What is TRUVADA?

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). TRUVADA contains 2 medicines, EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, or tenofovir DF) combined in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with HIV-1 infection. TRUVADA is for adults age 18 and older. TRUVADA has not been studied in children under age 18 or adults over age 65.

HIV infection destroys $CD4^+$ T cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

TRUVADA helps block HIV-1 reverse transcriptase, a chemical in your body (enzyme) that is needed for HIV-1 to multiply. TRUVADA lowers the amount of HIV-1 in the blood (viral load). TRUVADA may also help to increase the number of T cells ($CD4^+$ cells). Lowering the amount of HIV-1 in the blood lowers the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of TRUVADA are not known at this time. People taking TRUVADA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium complex* (MAC) infection. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking TRUVADA.**

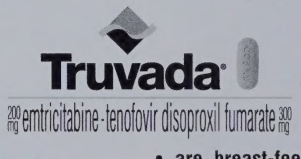
TRUVADA does not lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take TRUVADA?

- Do not take TRUVADA if you are allergic to TRUVADA or any of its ingredients. The active ingredients of TRUVADA are emtricitabine and tenofovir DF. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA if you are already taking ATRIPLA®, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?

Tell your healthcare provider if you:



- **are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** We do not know if TRUVADA can harm your unborn child. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if TRUVADA is right for you. If you use TRUVADA while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can be on the TRUVADA Antiviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **are breast-feeding.** You should not breast feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Also, it is not known if TRUVADA can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **have kidney problems or are undergoing kidney dialysis treatment.**
- **have bone problems.**
- **have liver problems including Hepatitis B Virus infection.**

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- Videx, Videx EC (didanosine). Tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) may increase the amount of Videx in your blood. **You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Videx together.** Also, the dose of didanosine may need to be reduced.
- Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate) or Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir). These medicines may increase the amount of tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) in your blood, which could result in more side effects. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz or Kaletra together. TRUVADA may decrease the amount of Reyataz in your blood. If you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz together, you should also be taking Norvir (ritonavir).

Keep a complete list of all the medicines that you take. Make a new list when medicines are added or stopped. Give copies of this list to all of your healthcare providers and pharmacist **every** time you visit your healthcare provider or fill a prescription.

How should I take TRUVADA?

- Take TRUVADA exactly as your healthcare provider prescribed it. Follow the directions from your healthcare provider, exactly as written on the label.

- The usual dose of TRUVADA is 1 tablet once a day. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines. If you have kidney problems, you may need to take TRUVADA less often.
- TRUVADA may be taken with or without a meal. Food does not affect how TRUVADA works. Take TRUVADA at the same time each day.
- If you forget to take TRUVADA, take it as soon as you remember that day. **Do not** take more than 1 dose of TRUVADA in a day. **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time. Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure what to do. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of TRUVADA or your anti-HIV-1 medicines.**
- When your TRUVADA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to TRUVADA and become harder to treat.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TRUVADA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA.
- If you take too much TRUVADA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking TRUVADA?

- **Do not breast-feed.** See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?"
- **Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection** since TRUVADA does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.
  - **Do not share needles or other injection equipment.**
  - **Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes or razor blades.**
  - **Do not have any kind of sex without protection.** Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to reduce the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- ATRIPLA, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD.

TRUVADA should not be used with these medicines.

What are the possible side effects of TRUVADA?

TRUVADA may cause the following serious side effects (see "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"):

- **Lactic acidosis** (buildup of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your doctor right away if you get signs of lactic acidosis.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **Serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity),** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any signs of liver problems. (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **"Flare-ups" of Hepatitis B Virus infection,** in which the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before, can occur if you stop taking TRUVADA. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months after stopping TRUVADA if you have both HIV-1 and HBV infection. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of Hepatitis B Virus infection.
- **Kidney problems.** If you have had kidney problems in the past or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys.
- **Changes in bone mineral density (thinning bones).** It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA will cause damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bone mineral density or may prescribe medicines to help your bone mineral density.

Other side effects with TRUVADA when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines include:

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the main part of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effect of these conditions are not known at this time.

The most common side effects of EMTRIVA or VIREAD when used with other anti HIV-1 medicines are: diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and headache. Additional side effects are stomach pain, indigestion, gas, inflammation of the pancreas, increased amylase, sleeping problems, abnormal dreams, weakness, pain, low blood phosphate, shortness of breath, increase liver enzymes, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, muscle problems and rash. Skin discoloration (small spots or freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

These are not all the side effects of TRUVADA. This list of side effects with TRUVADA is **not complete** at this time because TRUVADA is still being studied. If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider right away. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

How do I store TRUVADA?

- **Keep TRUVADA and all other medicines out of reach of children.**
- Store TRUVADA at room temperature 77 °F (25 °C).
- Keep TRUVADA in its original container and keep the container tightly closed.
- Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. If you throw any medicines away make sure that children will not find them.

General information about TRUVADA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use TRUVADA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TRUVADA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about TRUVADA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about TRUVADA that is written for health professionals. For more information, you may also call 1-800-GILEAD-5 or access the TRUVADA website at www.TRUVADA.com.

Do not use TRUVADA if seal over bottle opening is broken or missing.

What are the ingredients of TRUVADA?

Active Ingredients: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

Inactive Ingredients: Croscarmellose sodium, lactose monohydrate, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and pregelatinized starch (gluten free). The tablets are coated with Opadry II Blue Y-30-10701 containing FD&C Blue #2 aluminum lake, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose 2910, lactose monohydrate, titanium dioxide, and triacetin.

Rx Only

May 2008

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, and VIREAD are registered trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc. ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC. All other trademarks referenced herein are the property of their respective owners.

© 2008 Gilead Sciences, Inc. All rights reserved.

21-752-GS-021 19MAY08

GILEAD

GETTING STARTED

By Jamil Fletcher

As the new year approaches, many of us resolve to get in better shape. Whether you desire to look like a winner in your tight "athletic cut" T-shirts or to appear voluptuous in those hip-huggers, we all want to appear fit and confident. Starting a fitness program is usually a major hurdle to overcome. Here are a few tips to guide you through this process.

1. Consult your doctor

Be sure to consult your doctor before you jump into that killer workout program. Now may be a good time for you to get that annual physical you've been putting off. For those over 40 who either smoke, have high blood pressure, diabetes or other health issues, consulting with your doctor should be a necessity before you get that body moving.

2. Gauge your current fitness level

Your personal impression of your current fitness level may not jibe with reality. When was the last time you jogged a mile or participated in a high-octane aerobics class? If you can't recall, then perhaps you should test the waters before you lay out a program. Here are a few suggestions to get a feel for your current condition:

- How long does it take to walk or run a mile?
- How many push-ups can you do?
- Can you touch your toes when bending from a standing position?

3. Set realistic goals

Do you want to build muscle, lose weight or increase your endurance? For some, the goal is just to look good naked. Others may want to fit into those jeans they've been dying to wear, again. Perhaps you should choose a metric (waist, size, weight). Believe it or not, LL Cool J and Beyoncé did not get those bodies overnight. Achieving that kind of physique typically takes years of disciplined training and dieting. So be realistic about your goals.

4. Choose your activities

Your goals will guide your activities. Those looking to build those diesel muscles should hit the weights, hard! Those of you who are looking to shed a few pounds should increase your cardio activities. Check out your local gym to see what activities are best suited to help you achieve your goals.

5. Schedule your workout

We can all think of a million excuses to keep us from exercising. Get your planners out and schedule the best times for you to fit training into your weekly routine.

Now, **GET STARTED!**

"Fashion is about freedom of expression and individuality. There are no limits with what you can do with clothes. Clothes allow the outside world to get a glimpse of your personality...mood...interests. My designs help make that happen. When I'm designing and styling, I don't allow myself to be hindered by what the masses think. My designs have a classic look that never goes out of style. They are fun and sexy and make the person wearing them feel like they stand out in the crowd. CöD Fashions is all about helping you express your mood and personality." — Dwight Strickland, CöD Fashions

CRACKING THE CODE

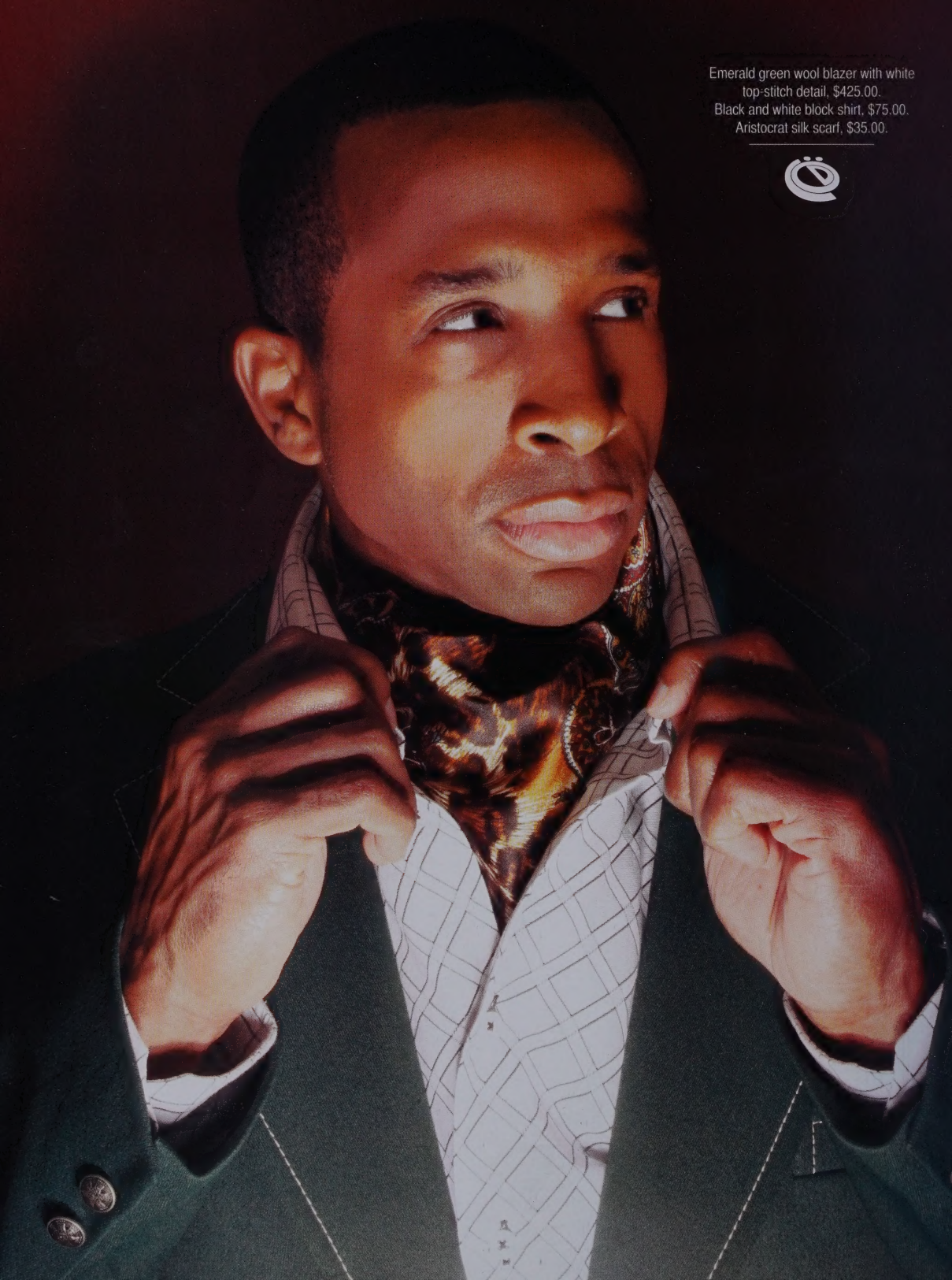
CöD Fashions (pronounced "code") knows the code for fashion: C—creative trends, ö—öriginal designs, D—distinctive styling. Providing men and women with that unique blend of urban functionality and couture sophistication, CöD designs clothes that fit every aspect of you: casual, club, after-five attire, loungewear and street couture. CöD is making strides to leave its mark on the world, making sure everyone knows the code for fashion.

Serving the Atlanta area for more than eight years, CöD Fashions was created by Dwight Strickland to meet the fashion needs of those who are bored with typical off-the-rack clothes. Discovered by Changing Faces Management, Inc., Strickland has been featured in more than 40 fashion and trade shows in Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia; Detroit; Charlotte, N.C.; and Miami. His designs and styling have appeared in several stage productions and independent films. Strickland has provided designs for dancers, models, photographers, and entertainers, and has worked with talents such as Nik Pace, Jonathan Plummer, Arrested Development and the cast of the film *Dirty Laundry* by Maurice Jamal.

Strickland, who resides in Atlanta, continues to provide his talents to various projects. He is currently working on after-five collections for men and women for release in 2009.

Navy wool blazer with metallic red lace detail, $450.00. Textured grey knit mock, $55.00. Grey wool slacks, $125.00. Grey wool fedora and white shirt, private collection.

Black and silver flapper cocktail dress, $175.00. Rhinestone jewelry, private collection.


Emerald green wool blazer with white
top-stitch detail, $425.00.
Black and white block shirt, $75.00.
Aristocrat silk scarf, $35.00.

Black and blue cocktail dress with mini sequins, $95.00. Blue knitted boa, $55.00. Rhinestone jewelry, private collection.

Earth green tweed blazer with
faux green fur collar, $600.00.
Ebony black shirt, $75.00.
Black wool slacks, $125.00.
Striped knit skullcap, $25.00.

Burgundy and gold brocade blazer with
burgundy velvet trim, $125.00.
Gold lamé knit one-shoulder top, $40.00.
Chocolate slacks, $85.00.

CöD Fashions
Dwight Strickland
Fashion Designer/Stylist
PO Box 14614
Atlanta GA 30324

codfashions@yahoo.com

myspace.com/codfashionsllc
codfashions.blogspot.com

Models:
Kendall and Temia

Reflecting on Leadership on World AIDS Day

By Frank J. Oldham, Jr.

sponsored by
GILEAD
Advancing Therapeutics.
Improving Lives.

These times are nearly unimaginable. I grew up in working class Brooklyn, inspired by freedom marches and civil rights. I remember when the first African Americans appeared on television.

Who knew then that we would see the first black man win the Democratic presidential nomination and become the next president of the United States?

Who could predict that an African-American woman would become one of the most influential and wealthy entertainers in the world?

It is our turn to celebrate our successes and to nurture our communities and ourselves. But we must remain focused. While we tackle the world, we must also remain focused on the challenges that strike in our own backyards…discrimination, violence, poverty and poor health care.

One success that continues to elude us is stemming the tide of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that, even though we black people are only 12 percent of the national population, we represent nearly half of all new HIV cases, and the HIV rate is eight times higher among blacks compared to whites. Even more startling, at least one in four blacks with the disease doesn't know they are HIV-positive. We get diagnosed later and die earlier than other racial groups in the United States. This is unacceptable, but it's something we can change.

December 1 is World AIDS Day, a tremendous opportunity to turn the tide of this epidemic in our community. Since 1995, the National Association of People with AIDS has actively campaigned to promote HIV testing, and we have come a long way. Never before have more resources been put into HIV testing for our community. Never before have there been so many options for us. But still, reluctance persists.

I have heard a lot of reasons to avoid taking an HIV test. Some of us don't know where to get the test; some are scared of the results; some don't know who they'd tell or what people might think; some are worried about what to do next; most of us prioritize our own health after everything else is done and everyone else is taken care of. But a regular, yearly HIV test could be the most important thing you do for yourself.

> *"The fact is: It's never been easier to get tested for HIV."*

The fact is: It's never been easier to get tested for HIV. Many places offer the test for free with the option of an oral swab or a finger prick, yielding results in as little as twenty minutes. On our Web site, www.napwa.org, the National Association of People with AIDS offers a simple directory to find local HIV testing sites.

Whether you test positive or negative for HIV, there are things you can do. Talk to your friends and family about the test. If you're negative, you can take steps to stay that way. If you're HIV-positive, there is treatment available. And remember, the earlier you get diagnosed, the better your chances for staying healthy long-term. Early diagnosis makes the difference.

We stand at an important moment: There are many HIV medicines available today that can help keep HIV under control for the long term. In addition, community organizations and health departments provide high quality and confidential support services.

Yes, it is our time. Time to revel in our current success, but also time to take action to ensure our continued success.

So this World AIDS Day, I urge you to follow the fine example set for our community by Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey. Get tested for HIV. Tell your friends and family to get tested. Offer to go with them, if that's what it takes. Do it for yourself—and for your loved ones.

"Houston, We Have a Problem... ...We've Lost Contact."

By Kevin Anderson

At a time when the country has put a lot of trust into "hope" and "change," I sit here *hoping* that *change* of another kind will soon come. You see, the number of newly infected YMCSMs (Young Men of Color who have Sex with Men) in Houston, Texas continues to rise year after year. As far as I can remember, I have always heard the messages of safe sex: wrap it up/put on a jimmy hat/strap up... and the list goes on. As a 33-year-old man I can honestly say that the words "sex without a condom" do not fit into my vocabulary, but as I listen to the youth around me, it seems to be a most common phrase.

My name is Kevin Anderson and I am an Intervention Coordinator—a health educator working to teach African-American men, ages 16-24, in Houston how to reduce sexual risk. Through my community and social service work, I have had many conversations regarding all kinds of sexual situations and the one thing that I am reminded of daily is that the solution to risk reduction isn't simply wrapping it up. I facilitate an intervention titled "Many Men, Many Voices" which focuses on realities in our lives that may cause risky sexual behaviors. For instance, what happens when the game changes and a partner whispers "I love you" for the first time and then whispers, "just let me put the head in?" These are situations not everyone can navigate successfully. Our program equips young men with the skills needed to make smart and healthy choices in the wake of temptation.

I have found communication can be an extremely powerful tool of transformation. Taking on the responsibility to listen and creating opportunities for the younger brothers to voice their issues has been my method of turning the doorknob of change. Professionally and personally, I have found that providing a safe space to give brothers the opportunity to talk lays a foundation for healing. I have two younger gay brothers. One has struggled with having unprotected sex even though he always had condoms available to him. Over the last year we have been able to break through some of his obstacles with having protected sex through simple communication. I'm twelve years his elder but I allow him the opportunity to hear his own thoughts aloud, thereby slowly opening his door to behavior change. Through our conversations, he realized he didn't feel worthy of being loved, and is now taking steps toward understanding what it is to truly love himself.

I initially questioned whether or not I wanted to take on such a difficult task. I wondered if I could really make a dent in such an enormous epidemic. Then it hit me that HIV is just another obstacle for the black community. Our history has been a path of obstacles: slavery, racism, equal rights and voting rights. Just as determined African Americans like you and I have defeated them, by selflessly working together HIV will also be defeated.

Houston, the fourth largest city in the United States, is no different than any other city when it comes to the amount of newly diagnosed HIV cases, and I am no different than you. Risk reduction begins by simply lending a hand, an ear, and a voice. I don't know about you, but I'd rather go down in history as the brother who helped reduce risk by educating and allowing others to tell their story. And there I begin to plant my seed of change.

Justin's HIV Journal

By Justin B. Smith

In 1999, I joined the U.S. Air Force and it turned out to be one of the best times in my life. I met my partner four years later while still in the military. He was living in Washington, D.C., and I was stationed at Dover AFB, so I moved to be with him. Within two years, my relationship with him would come to its conclusion. After my breakup, my behavior became erratic and out of control. I started doing things that just weren't me. In the later part of 2006 I would often get sick and I didn't know why. I had to call in to work so often that I almost lost my job.

One morning I woke up and got sick five times. I had flu-like symptoms but I didn't feel I had a reason to have the flu. I decided to call my best friend Bryan and have him meet me at Us Helping Us, People Into Living Inc. (UHU). UHU is where people can get tested for HIV in the Washington, D.C. area. They provide services that people with HIV/AIDS need to survive. I felt comfortable being at UHU because I used to work there and still had friends who were employed there.

I arrived before Bryan and decided to go ahead and get tested. I was administered the Orasure test which returns results within twenty minutes. I honestly didn't think I had HIV. I came up with excuses and said things to myself like, "I don't feel sick now, nothing could be wrong with me. I'm 26; I couldn't be HIV-positive." By the time the test was ready I'd smoked about ten cigarettes. I walked back into the HIV testing room and the reader asked me, "Are you ready to hear your results, Mr. Smith?" I said, "Yes I am." She said, "Mr. Smith, you've tested positive for the HIV virus."

I was devastated. I couldn't believe I was positive. The first thing I thought was that I couldn't have any children. My second thought was what I would tell my parents—they would be destroyed. Then my final thought was, "I'm going to die."

Bryan arrived at the clinic and saw it in my eyes. He held me tight as I wept in his arms. Bryan and I then went to the bar to decide what my next steps would be. I decided to fight—fight to stay alive.

When I told my parents they handled it the way any parents can handle their son telling them he has HIV, but my father and mother are strong. I told them, "Don't cry for me. Be strong with me."

After about two and a half years of being HIV-positive, I was forced to go on meds after my T-cell count lowered to 261 and viral load reached 77,000.

Currently, I am in a polyamorous relationship and all my family and friends know about my status. They have given me the love and strength to help me through this journey and to create this video journal.

This journal is to tell people that being HIV-positive is not a piece of cake. People need to know what they might endure if they put themselves at risk. HIV is neither glamorous nor a rite of passage. Watch the journal and think twice. In the words of Pedro Zamora, "I'm not dying. I'm living with it."

View Justin's HIV Journal at www.youtube.com/jsmithco98.

EVENTS FOR US

Heroes in the Struggle
This year, the Black AIDS Institute will host its "Heroes in the Struggle" awards gala in both New York City, on December 1, 2008 (World AIDS Day) at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and in Los Angeles on February 4, 2009 (right before National Black AIDS Awareness Day) at Walt Disney Concert Hall. "Heroes in the Struggle" is a photographic tribute to African Americans who have made outstanding contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Since its debut in 2001, the exhibit has traveled around the country, raising awareness, challenging individuals and institutions to get involved in their communities, and generating critical conversation about HIV testing and treatment.
www.blackaids.org

Party with a Purpose '08
Join Purpose Driven Lives, Inc. for their 3rd Annual toy drive holiday celebration to enhance the lives of those in need. Party with a Purpose '08 will be held from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday, December 6, 2008 at 2524 McKinney St., Houston, TX 77003. Attire: dressy-casual in red and black. An unwrapped gift for a child (infant -16 years) or a $10 donation is required.
purposedrivenlives@yahoo.com

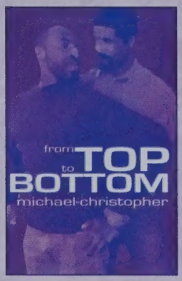
2009 Presidential Inaugural Festivities
The "Obama-nation" officially kicks off on on January 20, 2009 with a historical week of events including the official swearing-in ceremony, inaugural address, parade and a host of receptions, parties, balls and galas.
http://inaugural.senate.gov

Winter Explosion 2009
Heat up the slopes at the 15th annual Winter Explosion February 13-16, 2009. Founded in 1995, this event has evolved into the largest and longest-running black LGBT winter getaway. Guests experience an array of activities including educational seminars and workshops, skiing and snowboarding, dance parties, film screenings, a fashion show, an indoor pool beach party, a poetry slam, talent showcases, a worship service and even a vendor's marketplace. This year's event features a live performance by American Idol, Fantasia, and one of Broadway's newest starlets, Elisabeth Withers (*Color Purple*).
www.winterexplosion.com

In the Life Celebration
The Zuna Institute is planning its second annual "In the Life" celebration slated for this February 20-22, 2009 in Los Angeles.
www.zunainstitute.org or **www.myspace.com/soulpurposeaz**

In 2006, MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
rocked the community with his best selling novel...

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM



Virgil, the bottom to his lover Rodney's top, has an eye-opening experience that awakens the other side of his sexuality which has been dormant for years. While Virgil's urges grow he wonders: If Rodney doesn't flip, can he continue being his willing bottom?

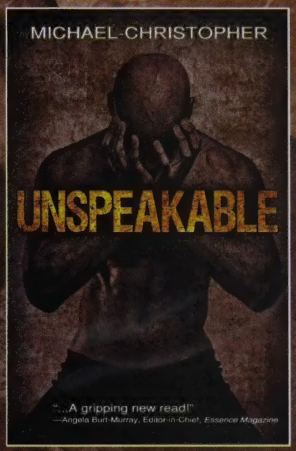
$15.95 ISBN 0-9710398-4-4

Read on as the story takes a turn in...

UNSPEAKABLE

Rodney returns to his hometown of Philadelphia and finds that he and his childhood friend Turner have both been abused by the same man. In an effort to right the wrongs of the past, Rodney decides to bring their abuser to justice, but *he* turns the tables and gets Rodney and Turner in trouble with the law. Amidst it all, Rodney's old flame, Katrina, enters the picture, but this time around she finds Rodney is not the man she once knew.

$15.95 ISBN 0-9710398-6-0



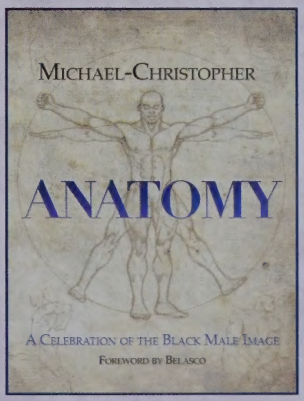
Also from Michael-Christopher...

ANATOMY

A Celebration of the Black Male Image

A collection of nude drawings and sketches that detail and honor, in the most beautiful way, the construction of the black male body. Both rhythmic and still, hard and soft, stoic and expressive, *ANATOMY* is always intriguing, addictive and stimulating. It's been said that black men are the envy of the world. Michael-Christopher's expedition of the black male image in these pages offers explanation as to why.

$21.95 ISBN 0-9710398-7-9



These titles and more are available at

www.MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER.com

Also available at Lambda Rising, Outwrite Books, Giovanni's Room, OutLoud, Oscar Wilde, Amazon.com.

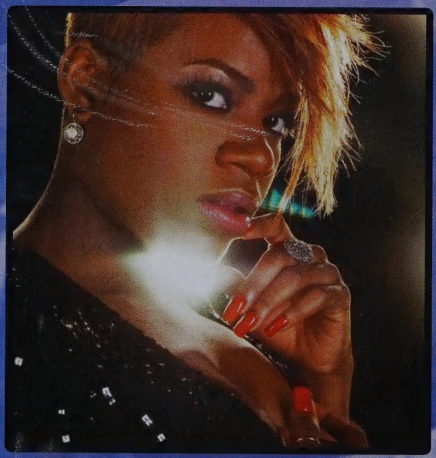
mcb MC BOOKS P.O. BOX 75313 • WASHINGTON, DC 20013

PRIVATE STOCK ENTERTAINMENT
Presents...

Winter Explosion® 2009

Special 15 Year Celebration

President's Day Weekend
Friday, 2/13-Monday, 2/16, 2009



First two artists confirmed: American Idol and smash Broadway hit musical "The Color Purple" come to Winter Explosion with live concert performances by FANTASIA and ELISABETH WITHERS (original Shug Avery in the musical).

www.winterexplosion.com 202-489-1032 Don@winterexplosion.com

"Fifteen Feelin' Fabulous!"

Winter Explosion is a registered trademark of Private Stock Entertainment. All Rights Reserved.

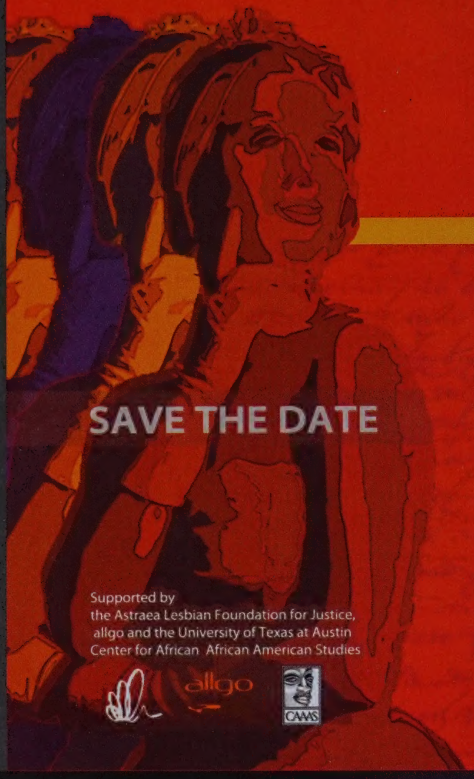
swerv

ulture & community

FREE

December 2008

PREMIER LITERARY ISSUE



fire & ink

A WRITERS FESTIVAL FOR GLBT PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

Fire & Ink III: Cotillion

Writers and readers and lovers of the work of LGBTQ writers of African descent take note

Shake out your finest words.
Get ready to shimmy 'til your line breaks.

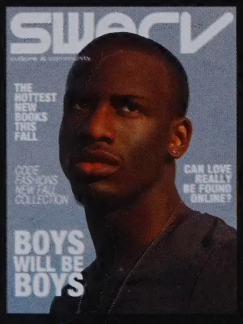
Fire & Ink III: Cotillion is almost here!
October 8-11, 2009
Austin, Texas

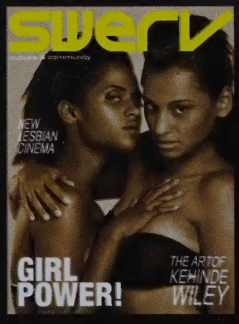
Find out more at:
2009.fireandink.org

Don't Miss an Issue of

SWERV

Visit www.SWERVmag.com to find out where to get your free copy and to subscribe!


swerv
culture & community
THE HOTTEST NEW BOOKS THIS FALL
CODE FASHIONS NEW FALL COLLECTION
CAN LOVE REALLY BE FOUND ONLINE?
BOYS WILL BE BOYS



©2008 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

contents

WINTER 2008

FEATURES

CARRYING THE WORDS 4
Literary Leaders. Words by Clarence* J. Fluker

CRACKING THE CODE 19
The newest garments from Cöd Fashions

DEPARTMENTS

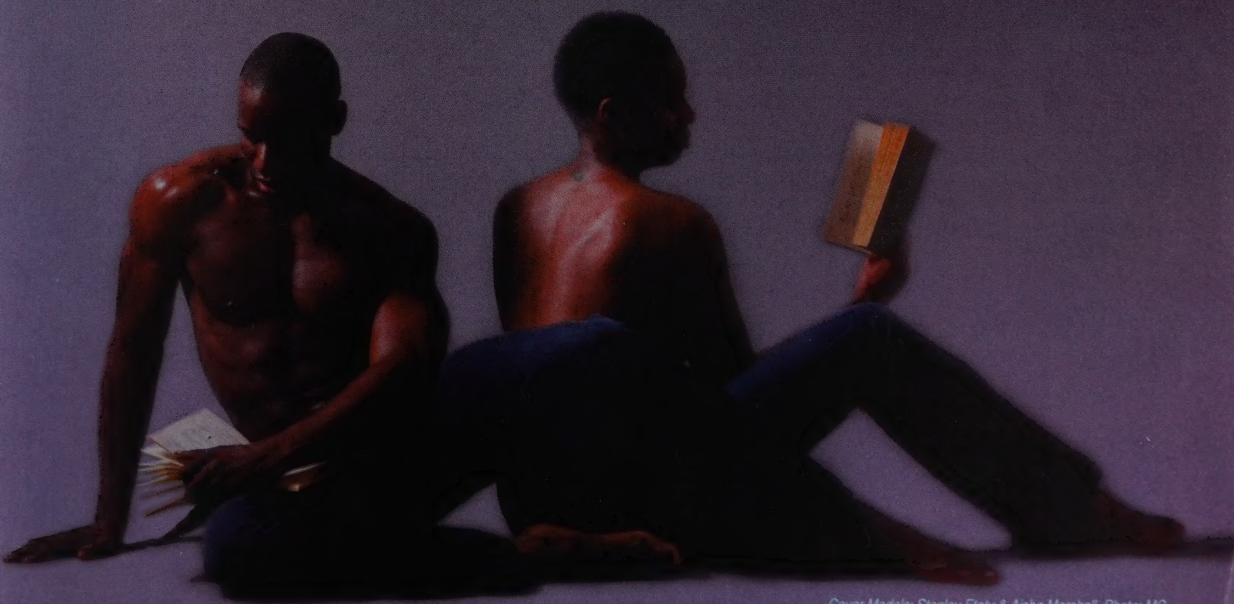
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR 3
Welcome from Editor-in-Chief, Michael-Christopher

MUSIC 13
Review of the new Tim'm West joint by L. Michael Gipson

FITNESS 18
Workin' it out with Jamil Fletcher

HEALTH 26
World AIDS Day reflections by Frank J. Oldham, Jr. and more!

EVENTS FOR US 28
Do something!



Cover Models: Stanley Etoty & Aisha Marshall. Photo: MC

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com

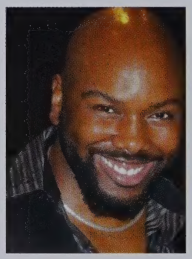
MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR

JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE: RIVENDALE MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

contributors



L. Michael Gipson is a Washington, D.C.-based cultural critic, community health planner and award-winning youth advocate. His sociopolitical essays have been published in two anthologies, including *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* (Chester Hartman, ed.). As a cultural critic and music journalist, Gipson's work has appeared in *Clik*, *Pulse*, *Arise*, *Pride*, *Amplify*, *Urban Dialect*, *Port of Harlem* and *Creative Loafing ATL*. He is editor and columnist at www.SoulTracks.com and heard weekly as "Cornfed" on *The Dave Brown Radio Show*.

Frank J. Oldham, Jr. is the President & CEO of the National Association of People with AIDS. Find your local testing site at the National Association of People with AIDS web site, www.napwa.org, or at www.hivtest.org.

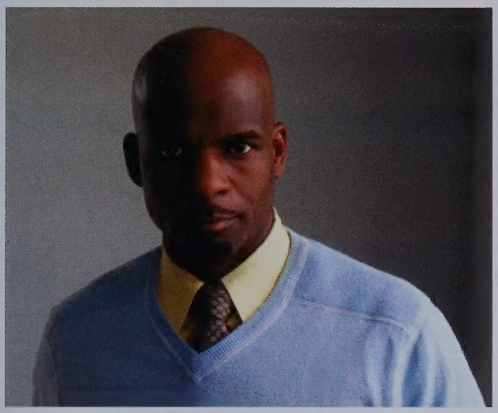
Kevin Anderson, a Los Angeles native, is an Intervention Coordinator for St. Hope Foundation's Fusion program in Houston, TX, where he now resides. Anderson is the founder and lead facilitator for Brother2Brother Gathering and Book Club for same-gender-loving brothers to discuss issues important to the community, while strengthening each other through fellowship and laughter. Anderson is also a founding member of Purpose Driven Lives, Inc., dedicated to enhancing the lives of those in need through fundraising and education.

Clarence* J. Fluker writes about what is on his heart and what is going on in the world around it. At times, that is an awful lot but he has managed to present it clearly as a playwright in his one-man show *LOVE*, as a contributor to the anthology *Spirited*, as an editor of *ARISE Magazine* and a guest writer for *IMPACT Monthly*. Words make him dance and dancing makes him happy.

Justin B. Smith, 28, has been involved in gay activism since 1999. A U.S. Air Force veteran, Smith was born and raised in Silver Spring, MD, and now lives in Baltimore. He has worked with and for gay organizations such as the National Black Justice Coalition, Human Rights Campaign, Equality Maryland, and Us Helping Us, People Into Living Incorporated. Smith is currently in school pursuing a degree in journalism.

Photo: Don Harris

From the Publishers



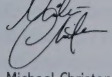
Inspiration can come from a multitude of sources; a song, a sermon, a speech or a story. It's astonishing how a simple word or thought is capable of giving birth to new concepts and ideas. Inspiration can even come from things that aren't so encouraging. As an African American I know all too well how oppressive situations can mobilize many to the aid of others or one's self. As a writer, artist and publisher, one of the things that inspires me most is my community.

I belong to two, often conflicting, groups. I am black and I am same-gender-loving. There is never a moment in my life when I feel one identity is more dominant than the other, but we live in a time when some people feel it's easier to assimilate into hetero-normal culture than stand up for what is in our hearts.

Although same-gender-loving people have a distinctly different journey, some feel sexuality does not warrant celebration, and therefore remain private about their orientation. Still, there are a few strong voices calling out from the masses, eager to document stories, songs and visions that speak to both cultures. Many times, those inspired voices go unheard by individuals who don't believe they're as legitimate as the voices of our straight counterparts. This magazine will hear those voices and raise them higher.

In my travels as an author, I've come across people who do amazing things: writers, musicians, singers, artists, photographers, activists—the list goes on. Meeting these people has been a blessing, and the camaraderie and collaborations that have resulted have motivated us all. Still, we've all struggled, at times, to reach the eyes and ears of the people we're speaking to, and about. SWERV is dedicating its pages to help these voices be heard.

It's my hope that SWERV will inspire those who may have given up on an idea or dream because it was linked to their sexual orientation. I intend to help those who are already doing great things in and for our community, to help them reach more, eager eyes. With that, we present to you our Premier Literary Issue. Please let us know what you think. E-mail us at info@swervmag.com and let us know how we're doing, who we need to feature and how you've been inspired.



Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

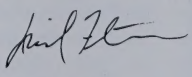
To swerve is to turn aside from a straight course. SWERV magazine represents a turn from the usual, a movement against the grain, an alternative to the norm. SWERV represents the voice of African-American members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, a population that often turns aside from both mainstream African Americans and the larger LGBT community.

The challenge to have one's voice heard is even more complicated when from within subcultures that are often marginalized. To be black in America is one thing, but to also be openly gay, lesbian, transgender or bisexual is another. While the recent election of the first African-American president is undoubtedly historic, it does not dismiss the challenges black people face in this country. Whether it is poverty, unemployment, incarceration, illiteracy or HIV/AIDS infections, blacks are disproportionately affected by the ills of our society.

The recent votes against gay marriage clearly indicate that this country's society, for all of its greatness, has yet to truly come to terms with homosexuality. Laws are still on the books that prevent LGBT people from openly serving in the military, and the level of targeted hate crimes against gays and lesbians continues to persist. Clearly, there is still work to be done.

SWERV magazine celebrates both the culture and community of this unique demographic of African-American lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people. Our pages will introduce you to extraordinary people doing phenomenal things in the worlds of literature, music, fashion, health, politics, sports and beyond.

Welcome to the world of SWERV.



Jamil Fletcher
Co-publisher

CARRYING THE WORDS

by Clarence* J. Fluker

Register Your Book Club with SWERV at info@SWERVmag.com

On the landscape of the written word there lies a unique space. This space, though small in magnitude, is magnificent and gives life and light to the pleasure, power and pain of the human experience. It has been ever-growing since its conception and continues to organically evolve. It is this unique space that represents the history, past and present, of black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender writing and publishing.

Beginning in the 1920s with the Harlem Renaissance-spawned magazine, *Fire!*, to the works of James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Essex Hemphill, E. Lynn Harris and James Earl Hardy, black same-gender-loving people have been telling their stories despite attempts to silence their voices. Until more recent times, a novel about two men or two women in an intimate or sexual relationship would not have been tolerated. Code and heavy implication were common literary devices used to mask the truth.

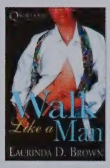
Thankfully, we are at a point in time in our history where we are free to express our love, lust and longings in most any way we choose. The way has been paved so that we are able to educate and entertain not only ourselves, but also our heterosexual family and friends, through the power of publishing and writing—telling our own stories, in our own voices.

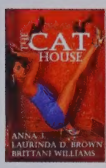
Twenty-first Century technology and the Internet have played a huge role in granting almost anyone the opportunity and power to publish their own work without the approval or backing of a major publishing company or literary agent. In the past ten years or so, the floodgates have burst open, the result being a tidal wave of literature that bathes us in stories, language and traditions of our shared community and humanity. No longer are we limited to being constructed and defined by heterosexual and/or non-people of color depictions of what it is to be black and same-gender-loving. Gone are the days of the one-dimensional black gay character. Today, we live and write our own narratives that tell of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender African Americans that are as varied as the shades of our skin.

Yet as the wave of literature grows wider and deeper, there is still very little space on many bookshelves for stories of same-gender love. Despite a growing awareness, and because of bigotry and other obstacles, a good number of LGBT authors have had to go it alone and publish their own works, and many of these authors have persevered and managed to build a gorgeous body of writing. Others have found a home in smaller publishers. Although they are not household names like Harris and Hardy, these authors are just as deserving of their praise and notoriety.

As you read about the following writers, some new, some familiar, realize that these are the current carriers of the word; those responsible for continuing our written legacy, keeping and growing our unique space on the literary landscape. Get to know these authors and support them, as they are our shared experiences and voices. Read on and get carried away!

LAURINDA D. BROWN





"I write about life...not lifestyles. With each literary offering, I try very hard to be different and present situations to which we all can relate. I also try to educate as well as entertain new readers so they can dismiss the initial fear of reading literature that represents a different segment of our culture. I stopped aiming to please everyone with my writing because not everyone is going to like what I have to say or how I choose to say it. My ultimate goal with any piece is to leave the reader wanting more."

Fire & Brimstone
Undercover
Walk Like a Man
Strapped
The Highest Price for Passion
Purple Panties (contributor)
The Cat House

www.myspace.com/laurindadbrown

G. WINSTON JAMES

"Trebor Healey, a Lambda Literary Award-winning author, said of my work, 'James explores in vivid, raw, disturbing detail the gritty realities of gay black life. These are stories that need to be heard, and that shockingly even 40 years into the gay movement are still being silenced, ignored or overlooked.'

"I am inspired by the words that go unspoken in our conversations, and believe as Lauryn Hill does that 'fantasy is what people want, but reality is what they need.' For that reason my work deals very unapologetically with sex and sexuality, identity and all the complexities that accompany them.

"My goals as a writer are to be original in my approaches and to leave readers with questions about themselves and the world around them."

Lyric
The Damaged Good
Voices Rising (co-editor)
Spirited (co-editor)
Shaming the Devil (forthcoming)

www.gwinstonjames.com

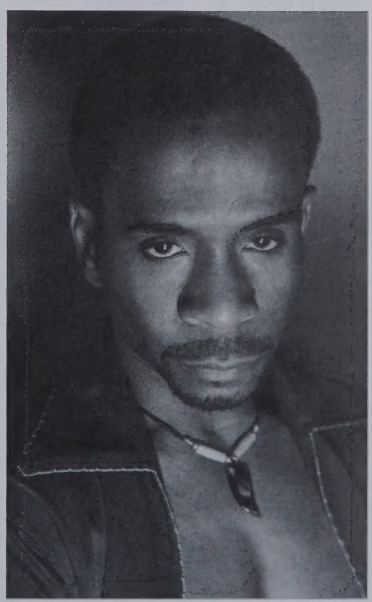
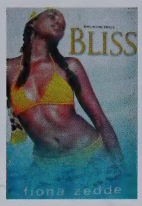
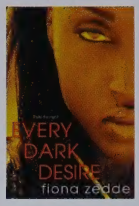
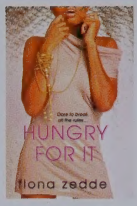


Photo: Luna Luis Ortiz

FIONA ZEDDE







"I hope that I tell stories people like me can relate to, stories that speak to an experience that a lot of fiction out there does not—or at least did not until very recently. And that experience is that of an immigrant, lesbian woman working at tying two sometimes clashing cultures together in a way that makes sense and makes for a happy and ecstatic life. I want my writing to show that. Stylistically, my fiction is a mixture of the old-fashioned (in terms of diction and theme) and the visceral. By that, I mean my work is heavily emotional. It digs into the heart of my characters and (hopefully) calls out emotion from the reader as well. I want it to be poetic (about flowers and rain and the breeze) but I also want it to feel very raw.

"My purpose in writing has always been to tell the truth about the lives of (some) lesbian women. And that truth is tied to my goal of wanting to connect with other women through the stories I create."

Bliss
A Taste of Sin
Every Dark Desire
Hungry For It

www.fionazedde.com

MARVIN K. WHITE

Author of the Lambda Literary Award-nominated collections of poetry *last rights* and *nothin' ugly fly*, is a poet, performer, playwright, visual artist as well as a community arts organizer. His poetry has been anthologized in *The Road Before Us: 100 Black Gay Poets*; *My Brother's Keeper*; *Gents, Bad Boys and Barbarians: New Gay Writing*, *Things Shaped in Passing*; *Sojourner: Writing in the Age of AIDS*; *Bum Rush the Page*; *Role Call*; and *Think Again*; as well as other local and national publications. A former member of the critically acclaimed Pomo Afro Homos, he has led creative arts and writing workshops from inner city elementary schools to youth centers for runaway kids to black gay youth support groups. White holds a fellowship in the national African-American poetry organization, Cave Canem; sits on the board of Fire & Ink, a national black LGBT writers organization; and is co-founder of B/GLAM (Black Gay Letters and Arts Movement), a Bay Area, California, organization whose goal is to preserve, present and incubate black gay artistic expressions.

last rights
nothin' ugly fly
Our Name Be Witness (Spring 2009)

www.marvinkwhite.com

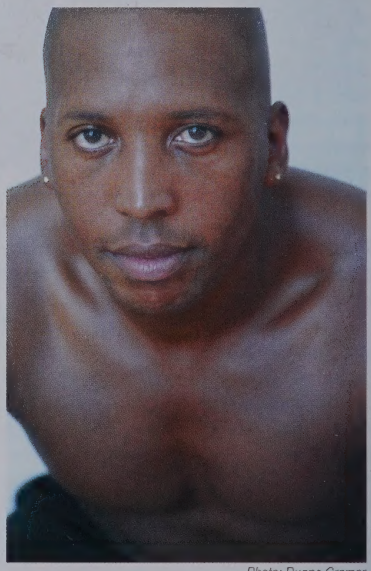


Photo: Duane Cramer

SAMIYA BASHIR

"My writing is about survival, resistance, healing and delicious joy. Poetry forces clarity. It cuts through the bullshit and layers of fatty tissue that we use to buffer us from actual feelings, observations, knowledge and experience. My work is my first and last love affair and poetry in particular has saved my life time and again; it's reminded me that my life is worth saving, so get off my ass and get to it. I'm very much such a Scorpio. Life. Death. Resurrection. Repeat. Shedding. Each book is like shedding a new skin, and coming out shiny, glistening, moist and new. Each new one a lesson in how to be light and flame in a way that doesn't burn."

Where the Apple Falls
Gospel (Spring 2009)

www.samiyabashir.com

Photo: Duane Cramer

STEVEN G. FULLWOOD

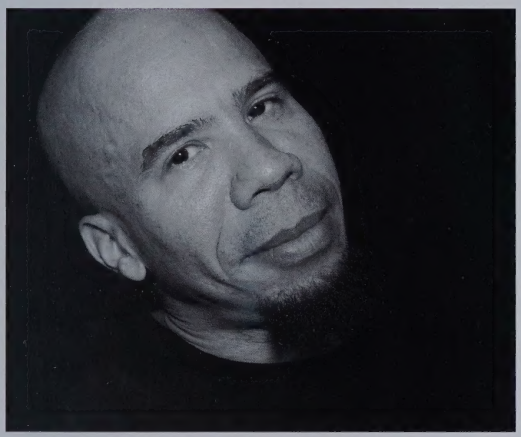
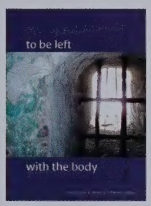
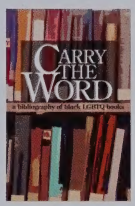


Photo: Donald Andew Agarrat





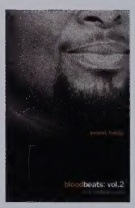
"My goal is to say something that is entertaining and 'true.' I write about whatever moves me. Although I primarily write about myself, I thrive on recording the voices of others. Essentially, I am telling one story—about you and me, what we do, and the sweet tension that keeps us loving and killing one another."

Funny
To Be Left with the Body (co-editor)
Carry the Word (co-editor)

www.stevengfullwood.com

ERNEST HARDY

Writing from a critical center that's melanin-based / feminist / pro-queer / unabashedly-leftist, L.A.-based writer Ernest Hardy pens essays, interviews and reviews whose subject matter ranges from underground hip-hop and American indie film to modern French cinema, from revealing interviews with Warren Beatty, Meshell NdegeOcello and Les Nubians to essays on gay rappers, queer rap audiences, and gay hip-hop porn, all pushing beyond clichés of the media-stoked "down-low" phenomenon. He's a Sundance Fellow whose work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Vibe*, the *L.A. Times*, the *LA Weekly* and more.



Blood Beats: Vol. 1 / demos, remixes & extended versions
Blood Beats: Vol. 2 / the bootleg joints

www.ernesthardy.com

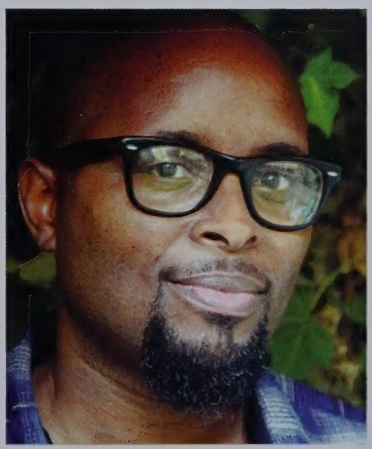


Photo: Alex Demyanenko

Photo: David E.F.P

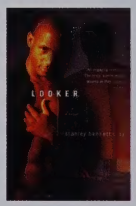
TIM'M T. WEST

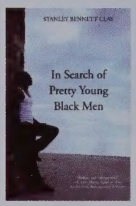
"It is my aspiration to eventually publish an array of work steeped in the spirit and passion of those who understand, as Audre Lorde so poignantly suggested, that 'poetry is not a luxury.' When I wrote my first book, Red Dirt Revival, *back in 2003, I was doing so with the urgency of someone who found courage to speak my truth in order to save, not just my life, but that of others. Since that time, I've produced another book,* Flirting, *as well as another small collection,* BARE. *So many of my brothas and sistahs died attempting visibility and affirmation, not just as black people or LGBT people, but as people fully seeking full reverence of their humanity. Being an independent publisher has not been easy, but each book I've written is a gift you give to yourself and supports the creation of new work. There is certainly more to come... by me, and those brave comrades who'll seek my guidance in offering the world their voice."*

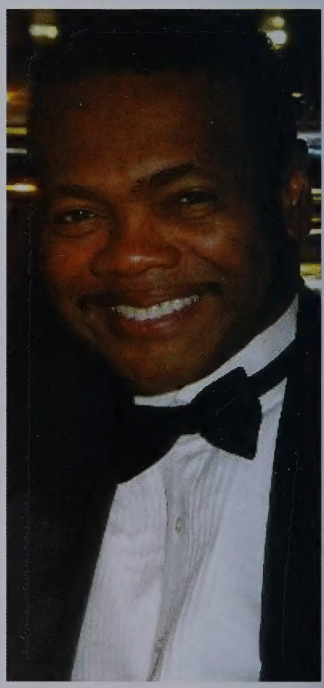
Red Dirt Revival
BARE
Flirting

www.reddirt.biz

STANLEY BENNETT CLAY







"How does one articulate the poetry of life? That is the welcomed conundrum that for parts of five decades as a published writer guides my pen to paper. There are so many stories out there to be told, but they are essentially rooted in one universal story that, I'm afraid, I'm not smart enough to thoroughly define.

"But I do know that it has something to do with being born, learning, living, loving, and leaving something of yourself as part of this great multicolored fabric, and then moving on to that next new unknown universe, made holy and eye-popping and infinitely simple because it IS new and unknown.

"It's all a wonderful tomorrow, new and Unknown. And with that prospect I write. I write with a poet's respect for coming upon things that educate me and I humbly articulate it with the best words that I can find, which often turn out to be the simplest words meticulously arranged to give reverence to the universe, which is giving reverence to God.

"I would never offer God dirty fruit. I will wash it and polish it and examine it and test it before I give it up to My Lord. When I write, I try and make sure my offering to Him is as worthy an offering that can be offered by one of His perfect imperfect sons. I want to honor him with the melody.

"Anyone can write a story. Few can sing it."

In Search of Pretty Young Black Men
Looker

www.myspace.com/stanleybennettclay

does your mama know?

An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories

Edited By Lisa C. Moore

By turns funny, passionate, angry and joyous, does your mama know? *reflects the complexity of emotions that accompany a black lesbian's coming out. These short stories, poems, interviews and essays—fiction and nonfiction—make up a powerful collection of original and new writing.*

"These voices [in *does your mama know?*] *are varied as are the tales they tell. Haitian, Jamerican, Afro-Canadian, biracial, Southern U.S., London by way of Barbados. Ages 14 to 90. ...It is extremely rare to see a book of any kind that reflects the diversity of black people in North America."*
—R. Erica Doyle,
Women in the Life *magazine*

"Few such voices have been raised to sing the history of African-American lesbians. Editor Lisa C. Moore noticed that and has set about to correct the omission, and she has done a masterful job of it."
—Dale Edwyna Smith,
Lesbian Review of Books

10TH ANNIVERSARY EXPANDED EDITION

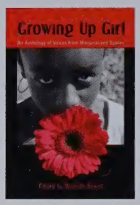
WITH NEW STORIES, COMING FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

does your mama know?
An Anthology of Black Lesbian
Coming Out Stories
Edited by Lisa C. Moore
Cover art © 1997 by Kamela Eaton
$19.95 paperback
RedBone Press
ISBN- 10 0-9786251-6-1
ISBN-13 978-0-9786251-6-0

REDBONE PRESS

Order through your local independent bookseller, or contact: RedBone Press
P.O. Box 15571 / Washington, DC 20003 p: 202-667-0392 / f: 301-559-5239

MICHELLE SEWELL

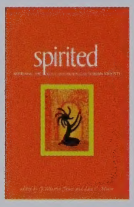


"I can not sing, or play an instrument, or draw a straight line, so I write. Writing is the most effective and consistent way that I have found to express my ideas and thoughts. Over the years, I have endeavored to develop a style that I hope feels authentic and accessible. It is not my intent to put the reader through the wringer to fully appreciate or grasp what I am saying. I consider it a compliment when a reader tells me that they feel like I am speaking to them directly and that I have captured some important life experience in a simple stanza or phrasing. I write because I don't want to do anything else."

Growing Up Girl (editor)
Just Like a Girl (editor)

www.growingupgirl.com

LISA C. MOORE



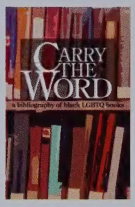


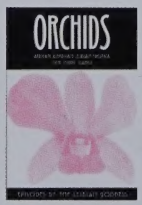
Photo: Ocean Morrisett

Lisa C. Moore is the founder and editor of RedBone Press, which publishes work celebrating the culture of black lesbians and gay men and promoting understanding between black gays and lesbians and the black mainstream. RedBone Press has 15 titles in print, including the new edition of *does your mama know? An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories*, as well as the best-selling book of essays by black gay men and lesbians on religion and spirituality, *Spirited*. Moore looks for work that is smart, engaging and innovative; as she says, "a manuscript has to grab me. I only publish what I fall in love with."

does your mama know? (editor)
Spirited (co-editor)
Carry the Word (co-editor)

www.redbonepress.com

KIMBERLY Q. - THE LESBIAN GODDESS



"I felt that there were no real 'get to the heart of the matter' stories for women of color without being vulgar or tasteless. Erotica is about the journey and the desire to obtain that ecstasy by enticing and seducing, which is how I write. My goal is to provide women with outlets that provide them the fantasy (or reality) of reliving and/or desiring that moment; to go beyond the realm of women's comfort zones and normalcy by providing them with exotic adventures, unexplained pleasures and inexplicable desires."

Orchids: African-American Lesbian Erotica One-Night Stands
Orchids II: Reality or Fantasy

www.womenofchoice.com

NIKKI RASHAN

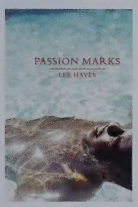
"I wrote Double Pleasure Double Pain *in an effort to reach out to women who are or know someone facing challenges similar to that of my main character, Kyla. In the story, Kyla finds herself attracted to another woman for the first time and must deal with both the excitement and confusion that comes with that experience. Some of the story is loosely based upon some of my own feelings coming out in my twenties; however, the major difference is that I've felt a connection to women my whole life while Kyla's experience is new.*

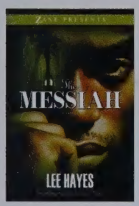
"My style of writing is conversational and easy to read; I once described it as a long, personal e-mail to a friend. The reader gets a firsthand look into Kyla's thoughts as she speaks with her friends and interacts with her new love interest. Responses from readers reveal that they are truly entertained by Kyla's humor and touched by the struggles she encounters. You Make Me Wanna, *the sequel, will be released in 2009."*

Double Pleasure Double Pain
You Make Me Wanna (2009)

www.nikkirashan.com

LEE HAYES



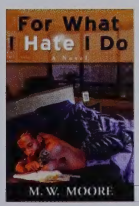


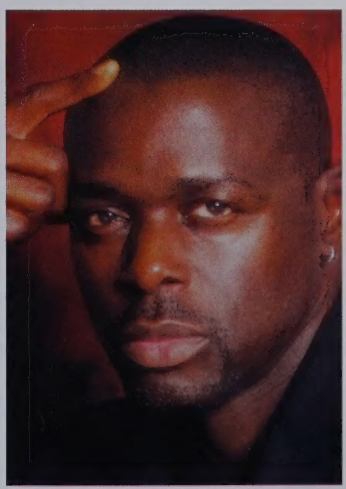
Lee Hayes understands and truly believes in the exceptional and profound power of words to delight, to heal, to entertain as well as to elicit change in lives of readers. It is his sincere hope that by reading his words that people will come to understand that actions yield real consequences which will affect their lives for better or for worse. He hopes that we all choose wisely. He also hopes that readers realize the innate value of their existence and that they dare dream to become more than they ever thought possible.

Passion Marks
A Deeper Blue: Passion Marks II
The Messiah
Flesh to Flesh: An Erotic Anthology (editor)

www.leehayes.info

M.W. MOORE



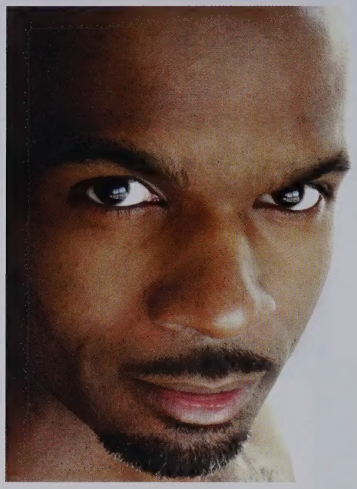


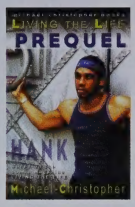
"I started writing as therapy. When I concluded writing to confront my behaviors, For What I Hate I Do *was [the result]. I did not want the book to be another typical novel about drugs and sex, but a fact-based novel that would confront and expose addictive behaviors. Now it's a movement. I was compelled to expose the ugly side of destructive behaviors because I once pretended those actions were normal. I self-medicated to become disconnected to the hurt, shame and damaged emotions I had inflicted on my bodily temple and on others. My work is an analogy unveiling the ugliness of destructive behaviors that deceived me with offers of pleasure without penalty. Even in this day of the DL lifestyle and HIV/AIDS crisis many still pretend that those issues don't exist, so I had to confront those terrors."*

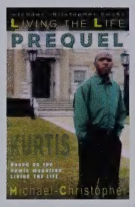
For What I Hate I Do
Internal Chaos

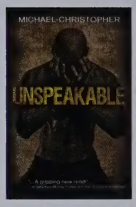
www.mwmoore.com

MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER









"At an author's panel, host Stanley Bennett Clay once dubbed me 'the black gay romance novelist.' As someone who values relationships, I accepted the moniker with pride. After I started writing, designing and illustrating HIV prevention comics and campaigns in 2001, I decided to approach my writing from a slightly different angle. After examining the obstacles we set before us while seeking out and building relationships (sexual positioning, HIV status, masculinity, etc.), I took on the challenge of tearing down those walls at their foundation. It is my hope that my writing will assist readers in making more positive choices, treating their loved ones with the respect they deserve and coming into a place of genuine acceptance and love."

Living the Life Prequel - Hank
Living the Life Prequel - Kurtis
From Top to Bottom
Unspeakable

www.michael-christopher.com

The inspiration for this article came from a very ambitious and much needed publication that you may have noticed in prior pages. *Carry the Word: A Bibliography of Black LGBTQ Books*, was compiled by three literary torchbearers, Steven G. Fullwood, Reginald Harris and Lisa C. Moore. Harris is the author of *10 Tongues*; contributor to *Voices Rising: Celebrating 20 Years of Black Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Writing*, and is a Lambda Literary Award finalist. He, Fullwood and Moore also share another affiliation: They are all part of the leadership of Fire & Ink, an organization devoted to increasing the visibility and awareness of the works of LGBT writers of African descent and heritage.

More importantly, all proceeds from sales of *Carry the Word* will benefit the Fire & Ink organization and its conference, Fire & Ink III: Cotillion, to be held in Austin, TX, October 8-11, 2009. "Cotillion" will bring together hundreds of writers whose work spans the genres, including: fiction, nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, playwriting, multimedia arts, performance arts. Attendees will include writers, editors, publishers, scholars, curators, audio and visual artists, students, teachers, thinkers, media professionals, readers and art lovers from diverse backgrounds and of diverse interests from around the country. For more information visit www.fireandink.org.

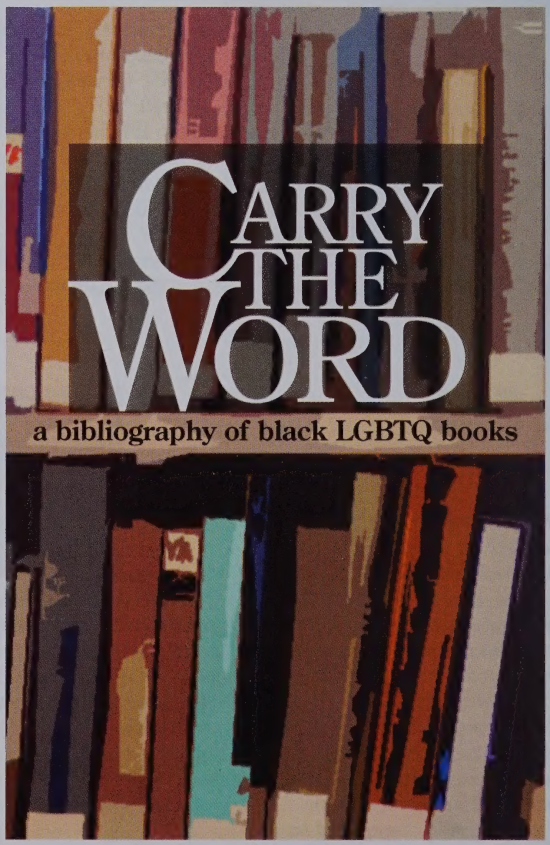


Photo: katina parker

TIM'M WEST
In Security: The Golden Error

by L. Michael Gipson

Tim'm T. West is red dirt born, but possesses the defensive swagger of cold Northern streets. His Timbs, hoodies and baggy jeans reek of stereotypes lived and feared; yet his undergraduate degree from Duke and double master's degrees from Stanford and the New School, respectively, belie every black male statistic ever imposed upon his brethren. He is ill with an incurable disease, but is a picturesque embodiment of athletic health and confidence. He is an out gay man whose truth, when spoken aloud, is usually met with disbelief and protestations; out gay men don't present like Mr. West, DL men do. He is a battle rapper. He has devoted his life to education and community uplift.

To say that Tim'm West is a man of deep contradictions is like saying Sarah Palin needs classes in geography and constitutional law. Yet with his cool demeanor it is easy to assume that this co-founder of the Deep Dickollective (D/DC), a pioneering gay hip-hop group, is a man who has made peace with his contradictions. Listening to Tim'm spit verse on "Walking Contradiction" off his third hip-hop project, *In Security: The Golden Error*, one could believe he has achieved an Obama-like zen. But between the swaggering poetic lines in *In Security* is a world of complicated, intense struggle for reconciliation of oppositional halves.

Tim'm's music represents the man; both typical and atypical of a brand we presume to know, but complex in a way we cannot know. Hip-hop and liberal black men resist single-dimensionality, straddling the progressive and traditional. They spit inspirations, but often fall into the oppressive, habitual privileges of old. That Tim'm, a leftist philosopher, chooses to tackle a medium whose repressive calls have failed lesser respondents proves a bold, if dicey move. Listening to Tim'm's artistic tensions begs the question: Can hip-hop's rules live harmoniously with philosophical social uplift? Consistent with "conscious rap," Tim'm's admirable work on *In Security* says "yes"...and "no." Even Tim'm gives in to temptation when taunted or to maintain tradition.

Appropriately, yesterday's pull is a running theme on *In Security*, particularly on knowing jams like "'80s babies" and "Old School." The Members Only era is also referenced through spare production and the privileging of lyric over beats, signatures of his previous works like *BlakkBoy Blue(s)*. Tim'm's impressive flow also reaches back to a time when relaxed rappers proved points with articulate cleverness rather than speed and grunts.

Using old way cadence, he spits new way consciousness. Rich with the genre's braggadocio, Tim'm's Kurtis Blow-baritone glides across complicated bass lines spitting liberation rhymes on everything from politics to same-sex lives. Like KRS-One—to whom Tim'm is often compared—progressive sentiments and educational lessons abound on soulful cuts like "Nappy." And he tackles obscure subjects with eloquence and sensitivity, such as on "Stutter," reflecting his speech-challenged childhood, and "Full Moon," about the love-challenged man he's become.

Yet, when cornered by an underwhelming, homophobic rapper who dissed Tim'm on a dismissible mixtape track, Tim'm's response on "Alone Again" is to pick up regressive tools of taunting humiliation in a decidedly testicular fashion. That Tim'm attacks his foe with intellectual quips in between fat jokes fails to remove the sting of his word choices. It is disheartening to hear a brotha who celebrates brothers of size in his love and poetry use the very thorns piercing those men's sides, even in defense of his wounded pride and ours. It is also very telling that I, a king-size brother, initially reacted with applause when hearing Tim'm competently defend himself and his community in ways respected by other men, other patriarchs. "You tell 'em, Tim'm; we ain't yo punks, bitch," I thought with a swelled chest, figuratively pounding my brother's back, ignoring how he chose to have ours.

Sobriety came through repetitive listening. Why was I proud of Tim'm's rebuttal? Because he proves we can brandish their weapons with the same dexterity? Because we can hurt them the same way they hurt us? Tim'm's art reveals truths about our heart, our struggle, our contradictions, our better selves and the work that remains. In its honesty, *In Security* leaves uneasy questions in its fist-pumping wake.

USE OF TRUVADA:

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor and combines EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate [DF]) in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat adults with HIV-1 infection.

TRUVADA should not be used with ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir DF 300 mg), VIREAD®, EMTRIVA®, Combivir® (lamivudine/zidovudine), Epivir® or Epivir-HBV® (lamivudine), Epzicom® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), or Trizivir® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine).

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of the following side effects or conditions while taking TRUVADA:

- **Nausea, vomiting, unusual muscle pain, and/or weakness. These may be signs of a buildup of acid in the blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious medical condition**
- **Light colored stools, dark colored urine, and/or if your skin or the whites of your eyes turn yellow. These may be signs of serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity), with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly), and fat in the liver (steatosis)**
- **If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B virus (HBV) and stop taking TRUVADA, your liver disease may suddenly get worse. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months**
- If you have had kidney problems or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys
- It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA causes damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, talk to your healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA

Changes in body fat have been seen in some people taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines.

The most common side effects of the medicines in TRUVADA when taken with other anti-HIV-1 medicines are diarrhea, nausea, fatigue, sinusitis, upper respiratory tract infections, nasopharyngitis, headache, dizziness, depression, insomnia, abnormal dreams, and rash. Skin discoloration (spots and freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

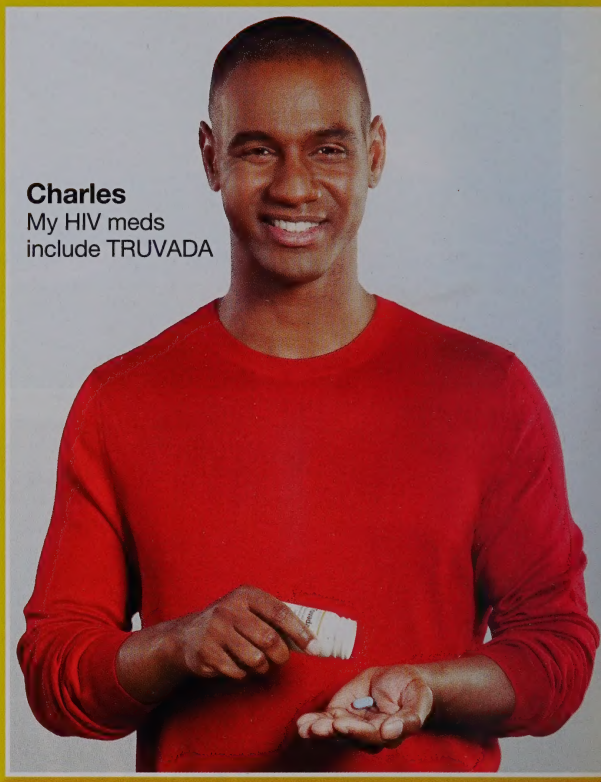
Discuss all medicines you take with your healthcare provider and be aware:

- Your healthcare provider may need to follow you more closely or adjust your therapy if you are taking Videx® or Videx® EC (didanosine), Reyataz® (atazanavir sulfate), or Kaletra® (lopinavir/ritonavir) with TRUVADA

Please see Patient Information on next page, including **"What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"** in the Patient Information section.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

I feel positive



In combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults

References: 1. Based on data from PHAST retail monthly data; September 2005-January 2008; Wolters Kluwer Health. **2.** Truvada [prescribing information]. Foster City, CA: Gilead Sciences, Inc.; May 2008.

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, and VIREAD are trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc.
ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC.
All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

GILEAD
© 2008 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT0450 7/08

#1 prescribed HIV med by doctors[1]

about my future. TRUVADA helps make it possible.

Individual results may vary.

With *once a day* TRUVADA for my HIV, I can plan for long-term success.

- Proven over the long term to reduce viral load to undetectable (<400 copies/mL) and increase CD4 cell count in 3 years of a clinical study*[2]
- Established long-term safety and tolerability*[2]

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

Ask your doctor about TRUVADA and go to www.TRUVADA.com.

Truvada®

200 mg emtricitabine · tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg

Think long term.* Starting now.

*Through 3 years in Gilead Study 934.[2]

Patient Information

TRUVADA® (tru-VAH-dah) tablets

Generic name: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
(em tri SIT uh bean and te NOE' fo veer
dye soe PROX il FYOU mar ate)

Read the Patient Information that comes with TRUVADA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. You should stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA. **Do not change or stop your medicine without first talking with your healthcare provider.** Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about TRUVADA.

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?

- **Some people who have taken medicine like TRUVADA (nucleoside analogs) have developed a serious condition called lactic acidosis** (build up of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of lactic acidosis.**
  - You feel very weak or tired.
  - You have unusual (not normal) muscle pain.
  - You have trouble breathing.
  - You have stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
  - You feel cold, especially in your arms and legs.
  - You feel dizzy or lightheaded.
  - You have a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Some people who have taken medicines like TRUVADA have developed serious liver problems called hepatotoxicity,** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of liver problems.**
  - Your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice).
  - Your urine turns dark.
  - Your bowel movements (stools) turn light in color.
  - You don't feel like eating food for several days or longer.
  - You feel sick to your stomach (nausea).
  - You have lower stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking nucleoside analog medicines, like TRUVADA, for a long time.
- **If you are also infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV),** you need close medical follow-up for several months after stopping treatment with TRUVADA. Follow-up includes medical exams and blood tests to check for HBV that could be getting worse. **Patients with Hepatitis B Virus infection, who take TRUVADA and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. A "flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before.**

What is TRUVADA?

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). TRUVADA contains 2 medicines, EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, or tenofovir DF) combined in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with HIV-1 infection. TRUVADA is for adults age 18 and older. TRUVADA has not been studied in children under age 18 or adults over age 65.

HIV infection destroys $CD4^+$ T cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

TRUVADA helps block HIV-1 reverse transcriptase, a chemical in your body (enzyme) that is needed for HIV-1 to multiply. TRUVADA lowers the amount of HIV-1 in the blood (viral load). TRUVADA may also help to increase the number of T cells ($CD4^+$ cells). Lowering the amount of HIV-1 in the blood lowers the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of TRUVADA are not known at this time. People taking TRUVADA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium complex* (MAC) infection. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking TRUVADA.**

TRUVADA does not lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take TRUVADA?

- Do not take TRUVADA if you are allergic to TRUVADA or any of its ingredients. The active ingredients of TRUVADA are emtricitabine and tenofovir DF. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA if you are already taking ATRIPLA®, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- **are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** We do not know if TRUVADA can harm your unborn child. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if TRUVADA is right for you. If you use TRUVADA while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can be on the TRUVADA Antiviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **are breast-feeding.** You should not breast feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Also, it is not known if TRUVADA can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **have kidney problems or are undergoing kidney dialysis treatment.**
- **have bone problems.**
- **have liver problems including Hepatitis B Virus infection.**

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- Videx, Videx EC (didanosine). Tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) may increase the amount of Videx in your blood. **You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Videx together.** Also, the dose of didanosine may need to be reduced.
- Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate) or Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir). These medicines may increase the amount of tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) in your blood, which could result in more side effects. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz or Kaletra together. TRUVADA may decrease the amount of Reyataz in your blood. If you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz together, you should also be taking Norvir (ritonavir).

Keep a complete list of all the medicines that you take. Make a new list when medicines are added or stopped. Give copies of this list to all of your healthcare providers and pharmacist **every** time you visit your healthcare provider or fill a prescription.

How should I take TRUVADA?

- Take TRUVADA exactly as your healthcare provider prescribed it. Follow the directions from your healthcare provider, exactly as written on the label.

- The usual dose of TRUVADA is 1 tablet once a day. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines. If you have kidney problems, you may need to take TRUVADA less often.
- TRUVADA may be taken with or without a meal. Food does not affect how TRUVADA works. Take TRUVADA at the same time each day.
- If you forget to take TRUVADA, take it as soon as you remember that day. **Do not** take more than 1 dose of TRUVADA in a day. **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time. Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure what to do. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of TRUVADA or your anti-HIV-1 medicines.**
- When your TRUVADA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to TRUVADA and become harder to treat.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TRUVADA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA.
- If you take too much TRUVADA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking TRUVADA?

- **Do not breast-feed.** See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?"
- **Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection** since TRUVADA does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.
  - **Do not share needles or other injection equipment.**
  - **Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes or razor blades.**
  - **Do not have any kind of sex without protection.** Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to reduce the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- ATRIPLA, Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD.

TRUVADA should not be used with these medicines.

What are the possible side effects of TRUVADA?

TRUVADA may cause the following serious side effects (see "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"):

- **Lactic acidosis** (buildup of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your doctor right away if you get signs of lactic acidosis.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **Serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity),** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any signs of liver problems. (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **"Flare-ups" of Hepatitis B Virus infection,** in which the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before, can occur if you stop taking TRUVADA. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months after stopping TRUVADA if you have both HIV-1 and HBV infection. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of Hepatitis B Virus infection.
- **Kidney problems.** If you have had kidney problems in the past or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys.
- **Changes in bone mineral density (thinning bones).** It is not known whether long-term use of TRUVADA will cause damage to your bones. If you have had bone problems in the past, your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bone mineral density or may prescribe medicines to help your bone mineral density.

Other side effects with TRUVADA when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines include:

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the main part of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effect of these conditions are not known at this time.

The most common side effects of EMTRIVA or VIREAD when used with other anti HIV-1 medicines are: diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, dizziness and headache. Additional side effects are stomach pain, indigestion, gas, inflammation of the pancreas, increased amylase, sleeping problems, abnormal dreams, weakness, pain, low blood phosphate, shortness of breath, increase liver enzymes, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, muscle problems and rash. Skin discoloration (small spots or freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

These are not all the side effects of TRUVADA. This list of side effects with TRUVADA is **not complete** at this time because TRUVADA is still being studied. If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider right away. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

How do I store TRUVADA?

- **Keep TRUVADA and all other medicines out of reach of children.**
- Store TRUVADA at room temperature 77 °F (25 °C).
- Keep TRUVADA in its original container and keep the container tightly closed.
- Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. If you throw any medicines away make sure that children will not find them.

General information about TRUVADA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use TRUVADA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TRUVADA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about TRUVADA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about TRUVADA that is written for health professionals. For more information, you may also call 1-800-GILEAD-5 or access the TRUVADA website at www.TRUVADA.com.

Do not use TRUVADA if seal over bottle opening is broken or missing.

What are the ingredients of TRUVADA?

Active Ingredients: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

Inactive Ingredients: Croscarmellose sodium, lactose monohydrate, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and pregelatinized starch (gluten free). The tablets are coated with Opadry II Blue Y-30-10701 containing FD&C Blue #2 aluminum lake, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose 2910, lactose monohydrate, titanium dioxide, and triacetin.

Rx Only

May 2008

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, and VIREAD are registered trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc. ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC. All other trademarks referenced herein are the property of their respective owners.

© 2008 Gilead Sciences, Inc. All rights reserved.

21-752-GS-021 19MAY08

GILEAD

GETTING STARTED

By Jamil Fletcher

As the new year approaches, many of us resolve to get in better shape. Whether you desire to look like a winner in your tight "athletic cut" T-shirts or to appear voluptuous in those hip-huggers, we all want to appear fit and confident. Starting a fitness program is usually a major hurdle to overcome. Here are a few tips to guide you through this process.

1. Consult your doctor

Be sure to consult your doctor before you jump into that killer workout program. Now may be a good time for you to get that annual physical you've been putting off. For those over 40 who either smoke, have high blood pressure, diabetes or other health issues, consulting with your doctor should be a necessity before you get that body moving.

2. Gauge your current fitness level

Your personal impression of your current fitness level may not jibe with reality. When was the last time you jogged a mile or participated in a high-octane aerobics class? If you can't recall, then perhaps you should test the waters before you lay out a program. Here are a few suggestions to get a feel for your current condition:

- How long does it take to walk or run a mile?
- How many push-ups can you do?
- Can you touch your toes when bending from a standing position?

3. Set realistic goals

Do you want to build muscle, lose weight or increase your endurance? For some, the goal is just to look good naked. Others may want to fit into those jeans they've been dying to wear, again. Perhaps you should choose a metric (waist, size, weight). Believe it or not, LL Cool J and Beyoncé did not get those bodies overnight. Achieving that kind of physique typically takes years of disciplined training and dieting. So be realistic about your goals.

4. Choose your activities

Your goals will guide your activities. Those looking to build those diesel muscles should hit the weights, hard! Those of you who are looking to shed a few pounds should increase your cardio activities. Check out your local gym to see what activities are best suited to help you achieve your goals.

5. Schedule your workout

We can all think of a million excuses to keep us from exercising. Get your planners out and schedule the best times for you to fit training into your weekly routine.

Now, **GET STARTED!**

"Fashion is about freedom of expression and individuality. There are no limits with what you can do with clothes. Clothes allow the outside world to get a glimpse of your personality...mood...interests. My designs help make that happen. When I'm designing and styling, I don't allow myself to be hindered by what the masses think. My designs have a classic look that never goes out of style. They are fun and sexy and make the person wearing them feel like they stand out in the crowd. CöD Fashions is all about helping you express your mood and personality." — Dwight Strickland, CöD Fashions

CRACKING THE CODE

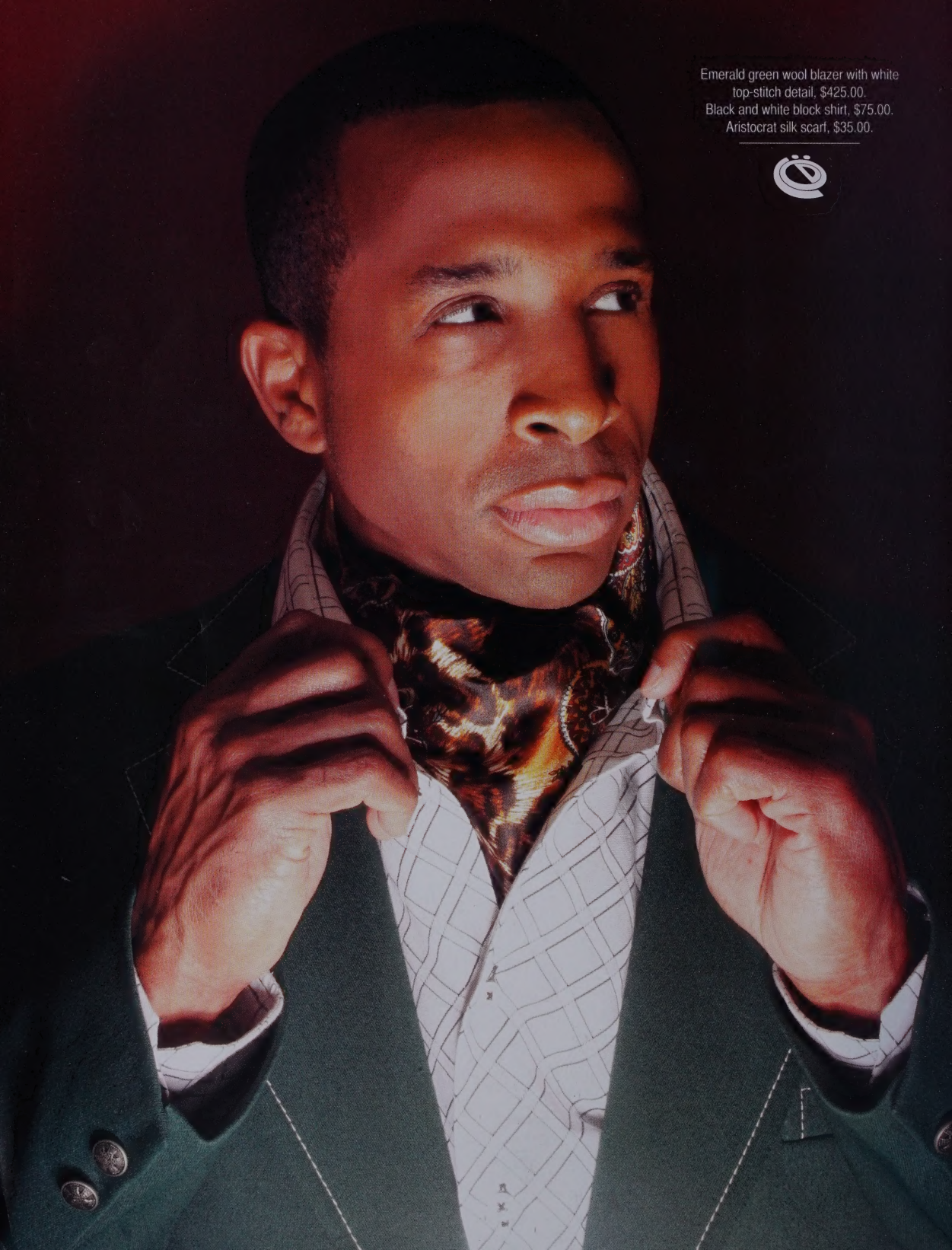
CöD Fashions (pronounced "code") knows the code for fashion: C—creative trends, ö—öriginal designs, D—distinctive styling. Providing men and women with that unique blend of urban functionality and couture sophistication, CöD designs clothes that fit every aspect of you: casual, club, after-five attire, loungewear and street couture. CöD is making strides to leave its mark on the world, making sure everyone knows the code for fashion.

Serving the Atlanta area for more than eight years, CöD Fashions was created by Dwight Strickland to meet the fashion needs of those who are bored with typical off-the-rack clothes. Discovered by Changing Faces Management, Inc., Strickland has been featured in more than 40 fashion and trade shows in Atlanta; Washington, D.C.; Philadelphia; Detroit; Charlotte, N.C.; and Miami. His designs and styling have appeared in several stage productions and independent films. Strickland has provided designs for dancers, models, photographers, and entertainers, and has worked with talents such as Nik Pace, Jonathan Plummer, Arrested Development and the cast of the film *Dirty Laundry* by Maurice Jamal.

Strickland, who resides in Atlanta, continues to provide his talents to various projects. He is currently working on after-five collections for men and women for release in 2009.

Navy wool blazer with metallic red lace detail, $450.00. Textured grey knit mock, $55.00. Grey wool slacks, $125.00. Grey wool fedora and white shirt, private collection.

Black and silver flapper
cocktail dress, $175.00.
Rhinestone jewelry,
private collection.


Emerald green wool blazer with white
top-stitch detail, $425.00.
Black and white block shirt, $75.00.
Aristocrat silk scarf, $35.00.

Black and blue cocktail dress with mini sequins, $95.00. Blue knitted boa, $55.00. Rhinestone jewelry, private collection.

Earth green tweed blazer with
faux green fur collar, $600.00.
Ebony black shirt, $75.00.
Black wool slacks, $125.00.
Striped knit skullcap, $25.00.

Burgundy and gold brocade blazer with
burgundy velvet trim, $125.00.
Gold lamé knit one-shoulder top, $40.00.
Chocolate slacks, $85.00.

CöD Fashions
Dwight Strickland
Fashion Designer/Stylist
PO Box 14614
Atlanta GA 30324

codfashions@yahoo.com

myspace.com/codfashionsllc
codfashions.blogspot.com

Models:
Kendall and Temia

Reflecting on Leadership on World AIDS Day

By Frank J. Oldham, Jr.

sponsored by
GILEAD
Advancing Therapeutics.
Improving Lives.

These times are nearly unimaginable. I grew up in working class Brooklyn, inspired by freedom marches and civil rights. I remember when the first African Americans appeared on television.

Who knew then that we would see the first black man win the Democratic presidential nomination and become the next president of the United States?

Who could predict that an African-American woman would become one of the most influential and wealthy entertainers in the world?

It is our turn to celebrate our successes and to nurture our communities and ourselves. But we must remain focused. While we tackle the world, we must also remain focused on the challenges that strike in our own backyards…discrimination, violence, poverty and poor health care.

One success that continues to elude us is stemming the tide of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently reported that, even though we black people are only 12 percent of the national population, we represent nearly half of all new HIV cases, and the HIV rate is eight times higher among blacks compared to whites. Even more startling, at least one in four blacks with the disease doesn't know they are HIV-positive. We get diagnosed later and die earlier than other racial groups in the United States. This is unacceptable, but it's something we can change.

December 1 is World AIDS Day, a tremendous opportunity to turn the tide of this epidemic in our community. Since 1995, the National Association of People with AIDS has actively campaigned to promote HIV testing, and we have come a long way. Never before have more resources been put into HIV testing for our community. Never before have there been so many options for us. But still, reluctance persists.

I have heard a lot of reasons to avoid taking an HIV test. Some of us don't know where to get the test; some are scared of the results; some don't know who they'd tell or what people might think; some are worried about what to do next; most of us prioritize our own health after everything else is done and everyone else is taken care of. But a regular, yearly HIV test could be the most important thing you do for yourself.

> *"The fact is: It's never been easier to get tested for HIV."*

The fact is: It's never been easier to get tested for HIV. Many places offer the test for free with the option of an oral swab or a finger prick, yielding results in as little as twenty minutes. On our Web site, www.napwa.org, the National Association of People with AIDS offers a simple directory to find local HIV testing sites.

Whether you test positive or negative for HIV, there are things you can do. Talk to your friends and family about the test. If you're negative, you can take steps to stay that way. If you're HIV-positive, there is treatment available. And remember, the earlier you get diagnosed, the better your chances for staying healthy long-term. Early diagnosis makes the difference.

We stand at an important moment: There are many HIV medicines available today that can help keep HIV under control for the long term. In addition, community organizations and health departments provide high quality and confidential support services.

Yes, it is our time. Time to revel in our current success, but also time to take action to ensure our continued success.

So this World AIDS Day, I urge you to follow the fine example set for our community by Barack Obama and Oprah Winfrey. Get tested for HIV. Tell your friends and family to get tested. Offer to go with them, if that's what it takes. Do it for yourself—and for your loved ones.

"Houston, We Have a Problem... ...We've Lost Contact."

By Kevin Anderson

At a time when the country has put a lot of trust into "hope" and "change," I sit here *hoping* that *change* of another kind will soon come. You see, the number of newly infected YMCSMs (Young Men of Color who have Sex with Men) in Houston, Texas continues to rise year after year. As far as I can remember, I have always heard the messages of safe sex: wrap it up/put on a jimmy hat/strap up... and the list goes on. As a 33-year-old man I can honestly say that the words "sex without a condom" do not fit into my vocabulary, but as I listen to the youth around me, it seems to be a most common phrase.

My name is Kevin Anderson and I am an Intervention Coordinator—a health educator working to teach African-American men, ages 16-24, in Houston how to reduce sexual risk. Through my community and social service work, I have had many conversations regarding all kinds of sexual situations and the one thing that I am reminded of daily is that the solution to risk reduction isn't simply wrapping it up. I facilitate an intervention titled "Many Men, Many Voices" which focuses on realities in our lives that may cause risky sexual behaviors. For instance, what happens when the game changes and a partner whispers "I love you" for the first time and then whispers, "just let me put the head in?" These are situations not everyone can navigate successfully. Our program equips young men with the skills needed to make smart and healthy choices in the wake of temptation.

I have found communication can be an extremely powerful tool of transformation. Taking on the responsibility to listen and creating opportunities for the younger brothers to voice their issues has been my method of turning the doorknob of change. Professionally and personally, I have found that providing a safe space to give brothers the opportunity to talk lays a foundation for healing. I have two younger gay brothers. One has struggled with having unprotected sex even though he always had condoms available to him. Over the last year we have been able to break through some of his obstacles with having protected sex through simple communication. I'm twelve years his elder but I allow him the opportunity to hear his own thoughts aloud, thereby slowly opening his door to behavior change. Through our conversations, he realized he didn't feel worthy of being loved, and is now taking steps toward understanding what it is to truly love himself.

I initially questioned whether or not I wanted to take on such a difficult task. I wondered if I could really make a dent in such an enormous epidemic. Then it hit me that HIV is just another obstacle for the black community. Our history has been a path of obstacles: slavery, racism, equal rights and voting rights. Just as determined African Americans like you and I have defeated them, by selflessly working together HIV will also be defeated.

Houston, the fourth largest city in the United States, is no different than any other city when it comes to the amount of newly diagnosed HIV cases, and I am no different than you. Risk reduction begins by simply lending a hand, an ear, and a voice. I don't know about you, but I'd rather go down in history as the brother who helped reduce risk by educating and allowing others to tell their story. And there I begin to plant my seed of change.

Justin's HIV Journal

By Justin B. Smith

In 1999, I joined the U.S. Air Force and it turned out to be one of the best times in my life. I met my partner four years later while still in the military. He was living in Washington, D.C., and I was stationed at Dover AFB, so I moved to be with him. Within two years, my relationship with him would come to its conclusion. After my breakup, my behavior became erratic and out of control. I started doing things that just weren't me. In the later part of 2006 I would often get sick and I didn't know why. I had to call in to work so often that I almost lost my job.

One morning I woke up and got sick five times. I had flu-like symptoms but I didn't feel I had a reason to have the flu. I decided to call my best friend Bryan and have him meet me at Us Helping Us, People Into Living Inc. (UHU). UHU is where people can get tested for HIV in the Washington, D.C. area. They provide services that people with HIV/AIDS need to survive. I felt comfortable being at UHU because I used to work there and still had friends who were employed there.

I arrived before Bryan and decided to go ahead and get tested. I was administered the Orasure test which returns results within twenty minutes. I honestly didn't think I had HIV. I came up with excuses and said things to myself like, "I don't feel sick now, nothing could be wrong with me. I'm 26; I couldn't be HIV-positive." By the time the test was ready I'd smoked about ten cigarettes. I walked back into the HIV testing room and the reader asked me, "Are you ready to hear your results, Mr. Smith?" I said, "Yes I am." She said, "Mr. Smith, you've tested positive for the HIV virus."

I was devastated. I couldn't believe I was positive. The first thing I thought was that I couldn't have any children. My second thought was what I would tell my parents—they would be destroyed. Then my final thought was, "I'm going to die."

Bryan arrived at the clinic and saw it in my eyes. He held me tight as I wept in his arms. Bryan and I then went to the bar to decide what my next steps would be. I decided to fight—fight to stay alive.

When I told my parents they handled it the way any parents can handle their son telling them he has HIV, but my father and mother are strong. I told them, "Don't cry for me. Be strong with me."

After about two and a half years of being HIV-positive, I was forced to go on meds after my T-cell count lowered to 261 and viral load reached 77,000.

Currently, I am in a polyamorous relationship and all my family and friends know about my status. They have given me the love and strength to help me through this journey and to create this video journal.

This journal is to tell people that being HIV-positive is not a piece of cake. People need to know what they might endure if they put themselves at risk. HIV is neither glamorous nor a rite of passage. Watch the journal and think twice. In the words of Pedro Zamora, "I'm not dying. I'm living with it."

View Justin's HIV Journal at www.youtube.com/jsmithco98.

EVENTS FOR US

Heroes in the Struggle
This year, the Black AIDS Institute will host its "Heroes in the Struggle" awards gala in both New York City, on December 1, 2008 (World AIDS Day) at Jazz at Lincoln Center, and in Los Angeles on February 4, 2009 (right before National Black AIDS Awareness Day) at Walt Disney Concert Hall. "Heroes in the Struggle" is a photographic tribute to African Americans who have made outstanding contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS. Since its debut in 2001, the exhibit has traveled around the country, raising awareness, challenging individuals and institutions to get involved in their communities, and generating critical conversation about HIV testing and treatment.
www.blackaids.org

Party with a Purpose '08
Join Purpose Driven Lives, Inc. for their 3rd Annual toy drive holiday celebration to enhance the lives of those in need. Party with a Purpose '08 will be held from 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Saturday, December 6, 2008 at 2524 McKinney St., Houston, TX 77003. Attire: dressy-casual in red and black. An unwrapped gift for a child (infant -16 years) or a $10 donation is required.
purposedrivenlives@yahoo.com

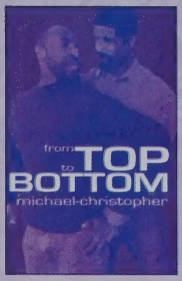
2009 Presidential Inaugural Festivities
The "Obama-nation" officially kicks off on on January 20, 2009 with a historical week of events including the official swearing-in ceremony, inaugural address, parade and a host of receptions, parties, balls and galas.
http://inaugural.senate.gov

Winter Explosion 2009
Heat up the slopes at the 15th annual Winter Explosion February 13-16, 2009. Founded in 1995, this event has evolved into the largest and longest-running black LGBT winter getaway. Guests experience an array of activities including educational seminars and workshops, skiing and snowboarding, dance parties, film screenings, a fashion show, an indoor pool beach party, a poetry slam, talent showcases, a worship service and even a vendor's marketplace. This year's event features a live performance by American Idol, Fantasia, and one of Broadway's newest starlets, Elisabeth Withers (*Color Purple*).
www.winterexplosion.com

In the Life Celebration
The Zuna Institute is planning its second annual "In the Life" celebration slated for this February 20-22, 2009 in Los Angeles.
www.zunainstitute.org or **www.myspace.com/soulpurposeaz**

In 2006, MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
rocked the community with his best selling novel...

FROM TOP TO BOTTOM



Virgil, the bottom to his lover Rodney's top, has an eye-opening experience that awakens the other side of his sexuality which has been dormant for years. While Virgil's urges grow he wonders: If Rodney doesn't flip, can he continue being his willing bottom?

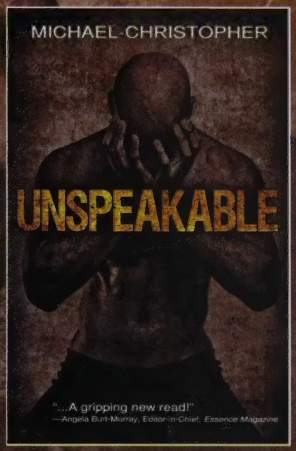
$15.95 ISBN 0-9710398-4-4

Read on as the story takes a turn in...

UNSPEAKABLE

Rodney returns to his hometown of Philadelphia and finds that he and his childhood friend Turner have both been abused by the same man. In an effort to right the wrongs of the past, Rodney decides to bring their abuser to justice, but *he* turns the tables and gets Rodney and Turner in trouble with the law. Amidst it all, Rodney's old flame, Katrina, enters the picture, but this time around she finds Rodney is not the man she once knew.

$15.95 ISBN 0-9710398-6-0



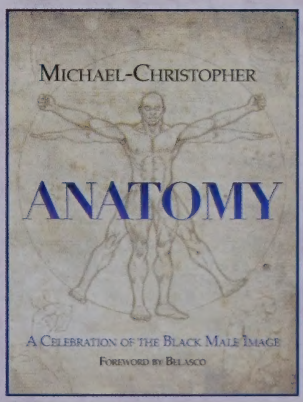
Also from Michael-Christopher...

ANATOMY

A Celebration of the Black Male Image

A collection of nude drawings and sketches that detail and honor, in the most beautiful way, the construction of the black male body. Both rhythmic and still, hard and soft, stoic and expressive, ***ANATOMY*** is always intriguing, addictive and stimulating. It's been said that black men are the envy of the world. Michael-Christopher's expedition of the black male image in these pages offers explanation as to why.

$21.95 ISBN 0-9710398-7-9



These titles and more are available at

www.MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER.com

Also available at Lambda Rising, Outwrite Books, Giovanni's Room, OutLoud, Oscar Wilde, Amazon.com.

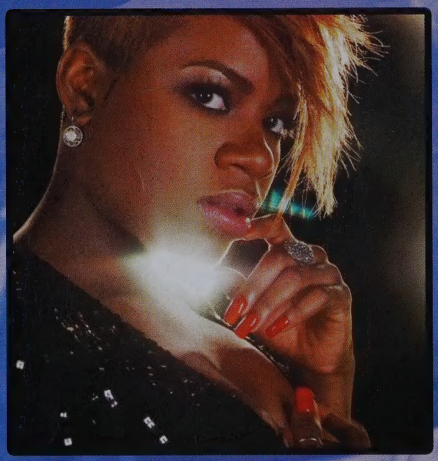
mcb MC BOOKS P.O. BOX 75313 • WASHINGTON, DC 20013

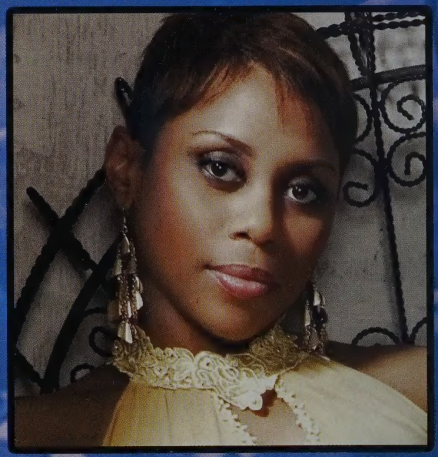
PRIVATE STOCK ENTERTAINMENT
Presents...

Winter Explosion® 2009

Special 15 Year Celebration

President's Day Weekend
Friday, 2/13-Monday, 2/16, 2009





First two artists confirmed: American Idol and smash Broadway hit musica
"The Color Purple" come to Winter Explosion with live concert performanc
by FANTASIA and ELISABETH WITHERS (original Shug Avery in the musical).

www.winterexplosion.com 202-489-1032 Don@winterexplosion.com

"Fifteen Feelin' Fabulous!"

Winter Explosion is a registered trademark of Private Stock Entertainment. All Rights Reserved.

sheen

culture & community

FREE

WINTER 2009

AUTHORS
M.W. MOORE
& MARCEL
EMERSON
& ARTIST
RICARDO
FRANCIS

FIRST
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE!

THE YOUNG & INSPIRED

CELEBRATING THE NEXT GENERATION OF BLACK LGBT MOVERS & SHAKERS

ALSO: FILMMAKER
FAITH TRIMEL
PLAYWRIGHT
LAURINDA D. BROWN
& BRAVE SOUL COLLECTIVE'S
MONTE J. WOLFE
& METRO TEENAIDS'
ISAIAH WEBSTER

does your mama know?

An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories

Edited By Lisa C. Moore

By turns funny, passionate, angry and joyous, does your mama know? *reflects the complexity of emotions that accompany a black lesbian's coming out. These short stories, poems, interviews and essays—fiction and nonfiction—make up a powerful collection of original and new writing.*

"These voices [in *does your mama know?*] *are varied as are the tales they tell. Haitian, Jamerican, Afro-Canadian, biracial, Southern U.S., London by way of Barbados. Ages 14 to 90. ...It is extremely rare to see a book of any kind that reflects the diversity of black people in North America."*
—R. Erica Doyle,
Women in the Life *magazine*

"Few such voices have been raised to sing the history of African-American lesbians. Editor Lisa C. Moore noticed that and has set about to correct the omission, and she has done a masterful job of it."
—Dale Edwyna Smith,
Lesbian Review of Books

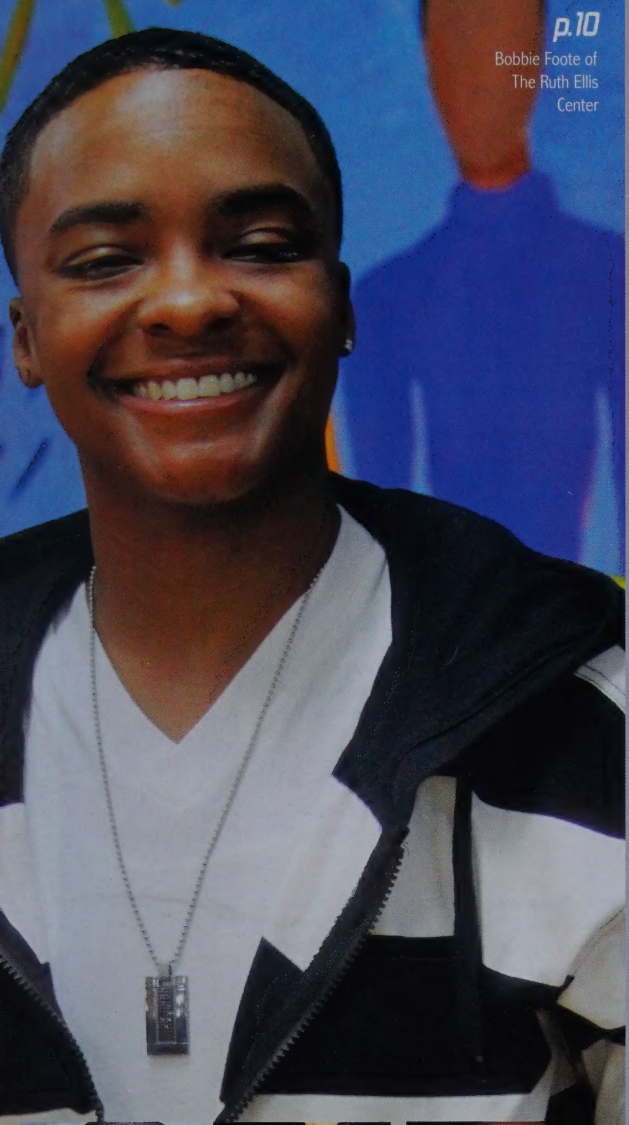
EXPANDED 2ND EDITION

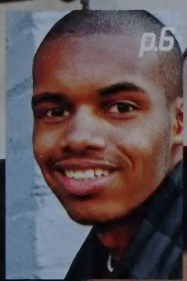
WITH 17 NEW STORIES, NOW AVAILABLE!

does your mama know?
An Anthology of Black Lesbian
Coming Out Stories
Edited by Lisa C. Moore
Cover art © 1997 by Kamela Eaton
$19.95 paperback
RedBone Press
ISBN- 10 0-9786251-6-1
ISBN-13 978 0-9786251-6-0

REDBONE PRESS

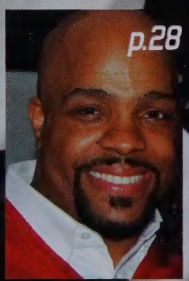
Visit www.redbonepress.com or Contact: RedBone Press
P.O. Box 15571 / Washington, DC 20003 p: 202-667-0392 / f: 301-559-5239





Young & Inspired
Anthony Riley of SMYAL

Film
Faith Trimel in *Family*



Events
Winter Explosion
founder Don Johnson

Cover photo: Don Harris. Models J. Rashod & Stephenie Fugett. Styling: Yardé Noir.

contents

WINTER 2009

FEATURES

THE YOUNG & INSPIRED 6
Uplifting features of today's black LGBT youth.

A SISTER WITH HEART & SOUL 9
Out and proud, Samantha Master fights for equality.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS 10
Detroit's Ruth Ellis Center's Bobbie Foote goes from homeless to helping hand.

AUSTIN ON FIRE 27
Fire & Ink III: Cotillion; the red-hot black LGBT writers festival.

WINTER EXPLOSION 2010: THE GRAND FINALE 28
The end of an era: The longest running black LGBT winter getaway hangs up its ski boots and goes out with a bang.

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR 5
by Michael-Christopher

COLUMNS 13
"As I See It" by Rob Smith &
"From the West" by Michelle Sewell

FILM 14
Taking a look at the new movie *Family* by Faith Trimel.

THEATER 15
Laurinda D. Brown brings new stage play *Bois Don't Cry*.

BOOKS 20
The newest installments from Marcel Emerson and M.W. Moore

ARTS: PORTRAIT MASTER 21
Sumptuous oil paintings of artist Ricardo Francis

COMMUNITY 24
Editorials from HIV activist Monte J. Wolfe and Metro TeenAIDS' Isaiah Webster III

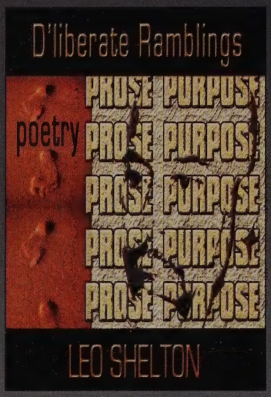
FITNESS 26
Get jumpin' with trainer Reico Walker.

EVENTS FOR US 30
Get involved!

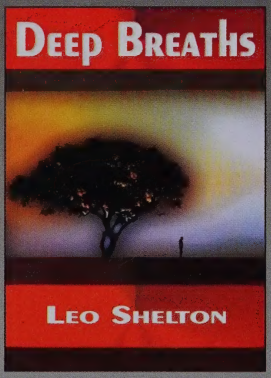
©2009 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

Available NOW!

New releases from Tugson Press and the 2008 IPPY Award winning author and poet, Leo Shelton.



D'liberate Ramblings
Poetry by Leo Shelton
Tugson Press
ISBN: 0-9791786-3-0
U.S. $12.00



Deep Breaths
Poetry by Leo Shelton
Tugson Press
ISBN: 0-9791786-4-9
U.S. $12.00

TUGSON
PRESS

www.tugsonpress.com

Tugson Press
P.O. Box 429
Temple Hills, MD 20757

contributors

Kenneth Anderson, a Detroit native, graduated from Jackson State University in vocal music education. Anderson is the founder of the Mosaic Singers, the musical wing of Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit; he has since become vice president and artistic director of the organization, growing Mosaic into one of the premier youth arts programs in the United States. He has led young choral groups to perform in 30 states in the U.S. and tours of Singapore, London, Denmark and Senegal. A recipient of the Spirit of Detroit Award and a community service award from Alpha Kappa Alpha, Anderson is a writer, photographer, community activist and human rights advocate.

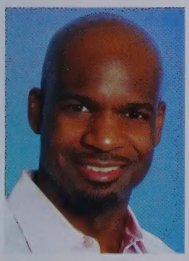
Patricia R. Corbett is a professional writer, public speaker and educator. She manages her blog, Out Black Voices, and is the owner/operator of JUSTASISTA, LLC, where she utilizes her writing, speaking and networking skills to create paradigm shifts in business, education and the community.

Lisa Joyner is a freelance writer/editor, activist and a producer on WPFW's LGBT radio show, *Inside Out*, in Washington, D.C. Her recent work includes poetry in the anthologies *Growing Up Girl: A Manifesta* and *Just Like a Girl*. She lives in Washington, D.C.

Clarence* J. Fluker is a freelance writer and blogger based in Washington, D.C. His work has appeared in a variety of print and online publications including *ARISE* magazine, where he served as Next Generation editor. His essay, "A Nation Divided," appears in the acclaimed anthology *Spirited* from RedBone Press. Fluker earned his undergraduate degree from Morgan State University and his graduate degree from American University.

Washington, D.C. native Yardé Noir began Genesys Productions before graduating from Duke Ellington School of the Arts in 1997. Noir went on to Bennett Career Institute majoring in hair and make-up, lending his talents as an experienced cosmetologist. Noir has worked as a make-up artist for Smashbox Cosmetics and Pretty by PR, and sits on the artistic team for Joya Cosmetics. Noir is the 2008 Elite Beauty Make-Up Competition Winner. Noir also attended the Art Institute of Washington majoring in graphic design and is currently pursuing a master educator's license.

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com



MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR

JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/MARKETING/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:
RIVENDELL MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

From the Editor

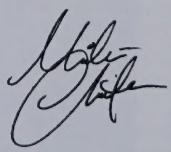
The older I get the more I say, "I wish I were 21 again," but I must be careful what I wish for. Being young, black and LGBT ain't no crystal stair, and the more we press forward for rights and visibility, the more opposition comes our way.

Depending on where you live, being young, black and LGBT could be downright dangerous. Our children have been taunted, chased and beaten for decades, and in recent years here in the United States, there have been more murders of black gay youth than I care to mention. Although none have captured national attention as Matthew Shepard, we are here to tell you that the lives of Sakia Gunn, Rashawn Brazell, Jason Mattison and all the other black LGBT youth, living or not, *matter*. And no child should be moved to end their life because they've been labeled a "fag" or "dyke."

In the past year that *SWERV* has been in existence, we have seen positive strides in our community: the coming out of Wanda Sykes, a nationally known comedian; filmmaker Lee Daniels, director of *Precious*, which is surely on the road to the Oscars; and Anthony Woods, the first openly gay African American to run for Congress. Events like these are what our young people need to see and embrace, letting them know they are not the "vampires" some seem to believe we are.

Despite what society might say, biological attraction is not a choice, disease or perversion, especially if it is acted upon with pride and dignity and love. However, the mantras "let freedom ring" and "the pursuit of happiness" somehow excluded looking for love. And although some define marriage as union between a man and woman there is another word in the dictionary with which some need to become familiar: Redefine.

Every life has the potential for greatness. Just like anyone else, black LGBT youth have potential to lead, inspire and create. The youth we've featured in our first anniversary issue of *SWERV* have done just that. One has even met the President and First Lady. If that isn't inspiring, then I don't know what is.



Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

Growing up has never been easy, and today's black LGBT youth aren't buying into the "too young" mentality. The following stories feature some amazing young people, all under 30, who have been moving and shaking at an early age. They're all about change, equality and community. They are...

THE YOUNG & INSPIRED

Compiled by Jamil Fletcher

ANTHONY CORTEZ RILEY

Words/Photo Michael-Christopher

It has been said that youth is wasted on the young; that's not the case for Anthony Cortez Riley, who has made the most of his 21 years. Riley is on the road to being an expert in LGBTQ youth advocacy—and has already met President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House, as an invited guest.

Riley lives just outside of Washington, D.C. in Waldorf, a suburban Maryland town. Although just thirty miles south of the District, Riley used to feel as if he was the only same-gender-loving person around. "I didn't know a whole lot of gay people," he says. "I went to Dupont Circle [in Washington, D.C.] because that's where I heard they hung out." While there, Riley stumbled upon a copy of *Metro Weekly*, a local gay magazine, and chanced across something that would greatly enhance his life. "I saw an ad for a youth group that hosted gay events that was a safe space," he says. That group was SMYAL—the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League—a service organization dedicated to promoting productive lives for LGBTQ youth while providing counseling, health and wellness education, and safe social activities.

After a thorough googling, Riley decided to attend the organization's events, and soon became more involved and informed. "I didn't know about LGBT issues," he confesses. "Like, there's no employee protection in Virginia" where Riley works as a government defense contractor. Riley was shocked when he realized that he was not protected from losing his job because of his sexual orientation. "I didn't know how much I allowed myself to normalize many of the stigmas associated with the LGBTQ community," he says. "The lack of visibility in my own community

made me less aware of issues that other [LGBTQ persons] faced."

This realization led Riley to become a youth advocacy intern; he learned how to raise awareness about LGBTQ youth needs, through educating the community, lobbying government officials and designing campaigns to create safer spaces for youth. Now, Riley is one of the youth leadership specialists who help facilitate the program at SMYAL.

The concepts of advocacy, activism and volunteerism are not new to this young man. As a small child, Riley remembers seeing a firehouse being built in his neighborhood and vowing to his parents, "I'm going to work there someday." Riley made good on his childhood promise and became a volunteer firefighter at age 17, and has encouraged friends to follow suit. In high school Riley also participated in the Best Buddies program, which creates one-to-one friendships for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

An example of Riley's continued activism occurred recently while he was shopping for a pair of "skinny jeans." Riley, a small-framed man, found himself at Forever 21, a store geared to young women. After making his selection, Riley asked the salesperson where he could try on the pants. The perplexed salesperson had to seek advice from her manager, as there was no separate room for him to try on clothing. While waiting for his fate, Riley Tweeted the situation to his friends, feeling he was bound for discrimination. His friends, including an employee of the now-defunct *Washington Blade*, had his back. Thankfully, the manager granted Riley access to the main fitting room, averting a civil rights standoff. Nonetheless Riley, with his backup troops, was ready.

Riley's hope is that other young people will begin to follow in his footsteps. "I think a lot of youth have gotten away from volunteering. They ask me, 'You're doing this and that...for free? Who does that?'" Apparently, someone who's going places. Riley was chosen to represent SMYAL at the White House's first LGBTQ reception in June 2009, where he met the President and First Lady. Who knows? If Riley sets his sights on it, perhaps 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. will be his next place of employment.

Photo: MC

ANGEL BROWN

Angel Brown, a native of Washington, D.C., has been active in the nonprofit social justice and social change arena for the past thirteen years. At 29, she is currently the director of Community Outreach & Partnerships for Metro TeenAIDS, a nonprofit community health organization dedicated to supporting young people in the fight to end HIV/AIDS. Over the years Brown has served as a trainer, organizer, educator, artistic director, performer and advocate in the fight against HIV/AIDS and social stigma. Her work began at the age of 15 as an HIV-prevention peer educator; she has been going full-steam ahead ever since. She is actively involved in the youth, people of color, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities.

[Continued next page]

ANGEL BROWN

[Continued from previous page]

Brown is an alumnus of both Americorps—National AIDS Fund and Americorps—VISTA, serving in 1999 and then again in 2001. She is also among a cadre of a select few, as she is a graduate of The Black AIDS Institute's African-American HIV University. She has served on the board of directors for Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS), a nonprofit in Washington, D.C. whose mission it is to assist female, male and transgender individuals engaging in sex work in leading healthy lives.

She has been featured in many notable publications, such as D.C.'s local LGBT newspaper *Washington Blade* and *The Advocate* magazine, as a result of her tireless efforts to advocate for the LGBT community. She is, without a doubt, a consistent advocate and educator for disenfranchised and marginalized communities. If asked she'll tell you that she intends to stay active as an advocate to address the numerous issues that affect her communities.

DESEREE FONTENOT

Photos courtesy of Deseree Fontenot

Deseree Fontenot is dedicated to a broader picture of social justice. She has had the honor of working on the logistical mechanics of nonprofit work as an assistant at the Williams Institute, a national think tank at UCLA's School of Law. The Williams Institute is focused on advancing sexual orientation law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship. She is also a board member of Gender Justice LA, a nonprofit organization focused on the rights of transgender and gender-variant identified people in Los Angeles. Fontenot is also a part of an arts group known as Women's Creative Collective for Change (WCC), an organization dedicated to bearing witness to under-told and untold stories; WCC believes in the importance of diversity, both within the organization and in the communities with which they collaborate. WCC seeks to create a safe and bonding space during their workshops, where participants may share their ideas and celebrate the art in their community.

Fontenot graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in English and minor in cinematic arts in May 2008. While at USC, she was the executive director of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Assembly, a division of student government that focused on advocating for the rights of queer students on campus through academic, political and cultural programming. Fontenot is motivated by her desire to see art and activism enliven and empower communities. She's most inspired by her grandmother's vitality; Fontenot credits her grandmother's quiet strength through years of struggle as the lead factor in keeping her family going.

After completing work at the Williams Institute and traveling, Fontenot plans to pursue a master of fine arts degree in writing. "Ideally, I would like to continue to work with organizations striving for social change and greater consciousness throughout my life," she says. Fontenot also admires the work of many artists, particularly spoken word poet and political activist Staceyann Chin. Fontenot says, "Her voice has always inspired me to raise mine higher."

SAMANTHA MASTER: A SISTER WITH HEART AND SOUL

Words/Clarence* J. Fluker

Photo courtesy of Samantha Master

Walking across the campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Md., one of the nation's 108 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Samantha Master became outraged when she saw a fellow student wearing a T-shirt that read, "Silly faggot, d*cks are for chicks." Rather than shaking her head and walking away, she did what came naturally for her: She walked up to him and told him he should be ashamed of himself and if he wasn't, she was ashamed for him. Master, a 21-year-old junior at Morgan State, double majoring in business administration and political science, is also an out lesbian and active member of Rainbow Soul, the GLBT student group on Morgan's campus.

Sexual orientation and gender identity have for many years been taboo topics in the black community, as well as the microcosms of community that exist on the campuses of many predominantly black colleges and universities. As the veil continues to lift on sexuality and expression among African-Americans, awareness of GLBT people of color and their issues is rising, attitudes are changing and a movement is gaining momentum for equity and safe spaces within people of color communities. Rainbow Soul was founded in 2001 to give visibility and voice to out GLBT students and their allies at Morgan. As a result of evolving attitudes on campus, membership in Rainbow Soul has now reached 40 students.

Master admits she was first attracted to the group because she was interested in connecting with like-minded GLBT people of color. Master recalls that in high school she would skip her sixth period class so that she could go to gay/straight student alliance (GSA) meetings at a nearby high school because hers didn't have one. In college her involvement in Rainbow Soul has offered her an opportunity to connect with peers on her own campus. "It has made me a stronger, louder, prouder and more courageous individual," she says. "If nothing else, the members of Rainbow Soul have made me proud to be a black lesbian. Seeing them every week empowers me to do whatever I can to fight for justice and equality. It has also given me the strength to fully come out."

For the past two years, Master has served as the community service and outreach coordinator for the organization. "Previously, we've been viewed as the 'gay group on campus' and in essence, that's what we were. I'm not sure if there was a connection between us and other organizations or other faculty and staff outside of our advisor," she says. "Now students view us as a community partner and staff members view us as a 'safe space/political action group.'"

Master recognizes the power of the collective whole and knows that working together to build coalitions also tears down walls of ignorance. She points to the work of Rainbow Soul's collaboration with the Morgan chapters of the Young Women's Christian Association and the National Council of Negro Women. "A few members of the campus NAACP came out to assist us in a letter-writing campaign we did to members of Congress to support a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)," she adds.

Master notes that the group doesn't just discuss issues that affect their shared communities; they do something about them. In addition to addressing campus concerns, Rainbow Soul has participated in phone banking for marriage equality, participated in walks to raise money for breast cancer research and volunteered with children in local hospitals. Master is active with a number of Rainbow Soul's current projects, including an intimate partner violence workshop, safe sex forum, transgender equality panel and an initiative to get a queer studies program.

This year, Master helped put together a workshop at D.C. Black Pride about being GLBT at an HBCU; she had support from Bowie State University's GSA, Eyes Wide Shut. A similar workshop, including Master, Morehouse alumnus and former Safe Space president Michael Brewer, and PrideTV's Anaré Holmes, was held at Atlanta Pride. Master notes there are other HBCUs with gay/straight alliances including North Carolina A&T's Acceptance without Exception, Winston-Salem State's Gay Straight Student Alliance, Spelman's Afrekete and Howard University's CASCADE.

Master is working on creating a national network of HBCU GLBT students and alumni. "My experiences at Morgan State have made me value the power of education," she says, "while my experiences with Rainbow Soul have made me value the power of being persistent, not backing down to get things done." When asked what she wants her legacy to be at Morgan State she replied, "I want students to remember that the administration of Morgan State University owes them more than a good education. Students have a right to a safe, healthy environment that nurtures and affirms them, and they have an obligation to protect that right."

Ruth Ellis Center Residential Counselor, Bobbie Foote

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Words/Photos/Kenneth Anderson

The Ruth Ellis Center in Detroit is a refuge for at-risk, Metro Detroit lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth ages 12 to 24 who are victims of abuse and/or neglect, or for those just seeking a safe space to be who they are without question or fear. Among their services are a drop-in center, street outreach program, transitional living programs and emergency housing shelter. And one of their success stories is a young woman named Bobbie Foote.

Bobbie Foote, now 25, was led to the Ruth Ellis Center at the age of 18. Foote's parents were drug addicts; she was raised by her grandmother for most of her young years. But at age 16 Foote came out as a lesbian, and her grandmother asked her to leave the house. Foote moved in with her still drug-addicted mother until the situation became unbearable. She subsequently lived with a young woman with whom she was involved, but when the relationship soured, she found herself homeless at age 18.

According to Jack Van Hecke, director of development and public relations for the Center, Ruth Ellis Center and Ruth Ellis House reaches about 2,000 young people per year; 97% are African American LGBT youth. Most come to the Center because they have been kicked out of their homes—frequently after coming out—or are in otherwise unlivable situations.

With nowhere to turn, Foote moved into Ruth's House, the transitional living wing of the Ruth Ellis Center. Ruth's House offers both semi-independent living (youth ages 12-17) and transitional living (youth ages 16-21). Foote says she learned life and interpersonal skills while living in Ruth's House, and credits her experience there for changing her life. "They offered me the chance to get my first real job," says Foote." I learned independence and responsibility."

The transitional program at Ruth's House offers housing, basic life skills

and counseling, interpersonal skill building, educational advancement, job preparation and attainment, and mental and physical health care. Foote's first job was at the International House of Pancakes. She remembers that Ruth's House helped her to save 8% of each of her checks to ensure that she would be able to make a smooth transition once she left the house.

The Center has a keen focus on educational gap support for the participants. The Center uses the McKinney-Vento Education Act, legislation specifically targeted for homeless youth, as a platform to provide vocational support. The Center partners with local school districts to encourage re-enrollment and a renewed commitment by educators and students to maintain good academic standing for the young people who are involved. They are provided with backpacks and other educational supplies, and given access to tutoring programs and mentors.

Students are offered help with college applications, career identification and financial aid. When, after becoming independent, Foote needed help with applying for financial aid for college, she contacted her support system at the Ruth Ellis Center for assistance. "No matter what, you are always family…and they help you," she says.

Not only did they help Foote get into college; they also offered her a job at the Ruth House. This opportunity was a dream come true for Foote; she was able to go to school while simultaneously giving back to the organization that had such a huge impact on her life. She became a residential counselor, a post she still holds.

Foote generally works the midnight shift at the house. She has a range of duties that include making sure the young people obey curfew, teaching them life skills, home economics and, perhaps most importantly, showing them how to be confident and comfortable in their own skin. She also teaches conflict resolution to each of the eight students she mentors, students who range in age from 15 to 20. All of her mentors are either in high school, life skills school, college or are learning a trade.

Foote says being an ex-resident helps her work better with the young people; "I can bring an understanding between the staff and the students," she says. Having once been a young person on the brink of homelessness and desperation herself, Foote can ultimately help her current charges understand themselves and the unique power they possess to control their own destiny.

Foote's favorite thing to do with the young people she mentors is to cook family-style dinners. " Unity is important to me," she explains. "I like to ask the kids how their day was and have us talk as a family, because that is what I miss most about my family…we were so close before they found out [about her sexuality]."

Foote's voice waxes poetic and nostalgic as she speaks of her past life. She is still estranged from much of her family, but maintains that it doesn't matter because she has her own independence and strength to depend on, something the Ruth House helped her build. Foote attends Wayne County Community College where she is studying social work. She plans to pursue higher education until she gets at least her master's degree; she dreams of one day opening her own transitional home for youth.

Ruth Ellis Center
LGBTQ YOUTH AGES 13-24
ARE WELCOME AT THE CENTER
GROUND RULES FOR THE RUTH ELLIS CENTER
Substance Use: Substance use is unacceptable at the Ruth Ellis Drop-In Center. If a person arrives under the influence of alcohol or drugs they will be asked to leave. If a person has alcohol/drugs on their person they will be asked to leave.
No Smoking: The Ruth Ellis Drop-In Center is a smoke free area
No profanity is allowed at the Ruth Ellis Center.
Violence: Violence of any kind - Verbal, physical, or sexual - or any threats of violence are unacceptable. Verbal violence includes name calling and harassment.
No horse playing or running, it's a hazard and we can't have it. Period!
Weapons: No weapons are allowed in the Ruth Ellis

When asked what message was most important to convey to youth and to people about the Ruth Ellis Center, Foote poignantly responded: "I want more youth to know that they have access to love and support and people like them. [Adults should] give time, loyalty and devotion to those who need it. No matter where you are, don't forget that the youth around you need you to stick it out."

Indeed—a call to action for us all.

You can find out more information and donate to the Ruth Ellis Center at www.ruthelliscenter.com.

Subscribe to

swerv magazine

For just $16

Never miss another issue of America's favorite black LGBT quarterly magazine!

Just log on to **www.SWERVMAG.com** and order online!

Get your subscription today!

And join us for **SWERV'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY EVENT**

Sunday, December 20, 2009 from 6pm to 9pm

at EFN Lounge in Washington, DC

(formerly BeBar)

- *Live Entertainment*
- *Specialty Cocktails*
- *Holiday Treats*

1318 9th St. NW
Washington, DC
20001

Pick up back issues while supplies last!

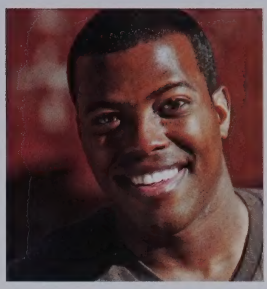
Find us on Facebook : *SWERV MAG*

Log on to www.*SWERVMAG.com* for event updates

THE WAY I SEE IT

Rob Smith

MARRIAGE EQUALITY: WHERE MY BLACK GAYS AT?



Up until about three months ago, I couldn't care less about gay marriage. I mean, our gay leadership decided that this was going to be the Issue of Our Time although we still haven't even ended HIV? This is the issue we won't shut up about, although we've got gay kids that are nearly three times more likely to be homeless than their straight counterparts? You've gotta be kidding me.

So back in the summer of 2009, Cleve Jones (rent *Milk* if you don't know) woke up one day and decided that there was going to be a national march on Washington, D.C. for equal marriage rights for gays. This was of course met with the usual sneering and derision from the gay blogosphere, and if there's anywhere the white gays and the black gays can find common ground, it's definitely within criticizing the sometimes weak and ineffectual leaders of the gay community who seem to be more concerned with giving awards to hetero celebrities who "support our cause" (whatever that means) than with actually inspiring people to bring about the change we need. Not that I was changing anything, mind you, but it sure was easy to gripe about it on the various gay message boards, or over cocktails with friends, or while I was doing everything but trying to do anything for the community. From the message boards to the clubs, to the LGBT center and the little gay industry parties, everyone seemed to be delighting in what an obvious disaster this so-called Equality March was going to be. We were pretty much resigned to the fact that nobody would show and it would be a total embarrassment that may actually set the movement back.

About a month beforehand, though, a funny thing started to happen. The conversation started to change, and people became less invested in badmouthing it and more worried about nobody showing. If nobody showed, the march would be a failure and prove that gays are more interested in their next drink and their next trick than anything else. They would win, the they who would already be in D.C. protesting gay marriage whether 500 or 500,000 people showed up, the they who perfected their gay-baiting on Fox News and got enough signatures to put something like Prop 8 on the ballot in California. Well, we couldn't let that happen.

I found myself on a bus to D.C. the day of the march, a week after being inspired by meeting Cleve Jones at the New York City LGBT Community Center. He answered my question about whether gay marriage was really my fight as an African-American gay male with three simple words. "You know," he said to me, with the patience and exasperation of someone who had been fighting for a long time, "it's about economics." For some reason, I finally got that.

OK, sure, the A-Gays with the condos and Fire Island shares would be able to marry their partners and have the financial security and benefits that marriage gives, but then again so could those two gay guys in Ohio who have been barely making ends meet, or the lesbians in Idaho that have been in a relationship longer than any of Britney Spears' marriages have lasted. Those are the people that I can relate to, and maybe it took someone to finally mention them, since all I'm used to seeing in this fight is the same affluent gays in Armani suits pontificating about equality.

All right. All on board. With that, my cloudy view of the gay marriage fight as that solely of privileged, rich, white gays was gone, and I was off to march, hoping that my fellow black gays had gotten the memo and would be heading out to D.C. in force to make our presence known. After all, this was the place where, as one friend so eloquently relayed to me after a weekend trip, he had "never seen so many black queens" in his life. Unfortunately dear readers, there weren't a lot of black gays. In fact, I would go so far as to say that our presence wasn't even a blip on the radar.

You know what? I get it. A lot of black gays feel alienated by the mainstream gay establishment, which tends to be very, very white and sometimes not so open to gays of color, particularly black gays. What I saw at the Equality March was a concentrated effort to break through those barriers that have been up for much too long, and I took it as a sign that things are starting to change. Any reader of this magazine is familiar with the brilliant Staceyann Chin; she performed an absolutely spine-tingling piece at the march, and Julian Bond of the NAACP was one of the keynote speakers.

What I am saying is that the times are changing, but are we as LGBT people of color changing with them? We definitely have a lot on our plates, but maybe it's time to take a harder look at full marriage equality as at least a side dish in the black gay issues buffet. After all, to borrow from the divine Sojourner Truth, ain't I a gay, too?

FROM THE WEST

Michelle Sewell

THE BLACK (FEMALE) BODY IN HOLLYWOOD

Last month I had the opportunity to attend a book release party for a new anthology, *The Black Body*, edited by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah. The collection of essays and poems explores the idea of what it means to have, or to love, a black body. Danquah assembled thirty black, white and biracial contributors to "take on the challenge of interpreting the black body's dramatic role in American culture." The book was robust and provocative and left me contemplating how the black body—specifically the black female body—takes up room in the entertainment machine we call Hollywood. Hollywood, the land of make-believe and glamour, is largely responsible for what we define as beautiful, desirable or sexy in this country.

Recently I was on Rodeo Drive and saw reality star Kim Kardashian (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians*) in the flesh. I'm aware that she is not black, but follow along anyway. She is the poster girl for "curvy" in these parts. What struck me first was how small she is. Small as in height; even with the six-inch heels it is clear she is barely 5'3". But she is also small in frame; my guess is she is probably a size 4. Her infamous butt is, well, a butt. There is no denying she has junk in her trunk, but the trunk belongs to a Mini Cooper as opposed to a Ford Taurus. But she, along with a handful of other actresses, has become the anemic measuring stick that is a fraudulent example of "real" bodies in L.A.

Every month a new starlet is dubbed the "It Girl"; magazines run shiny pictorials to support the proclamation. On the rare occasions when a black actress is sprinkled with "It Girl" fairy dust, there are a series of predictable adjectives that are trotted out to describe her. She is sassy, strong, serious, sexy, steely (yes, I am going for serial alliteration) and intense (that one is used for Angela Bassett). And when her body is described the word "curvy" is always on the top of the list. There is nothing wrong with being curvy, except it is the Hollywood euphemism of saying "bigger than a size 2." In the world outside of L.A., Gabriel Union, Nia Long and Halle Berry would have ham sandwiches forced on them on a regular basis—but those actresses do not inhabit our world. For them to compete for time on the silver screen they must take on all the markers (long weaves, extreme diets, tiny bodies) of their white counterparts. They simply become tea-stained Barbie dolls.

The discussion of how women's bodies are perceived in Hollywood is

FAITH IN FAMILY

Words/Lisa Joyner

Courtesy of Blue Butterfly Productio

Faith Trimel is proof that one can have a hand in their own destiny if they choose to do so. Acting is her dream—so she cast herself as a lead in two films that she wrote, directed and produced (*Black Aura on an Angel*, a romance thriller, and her most recent film, *Family*, a drama). *Family* showed at Reel Affirmations 19, Washington, D.C.'s LGBT Film Festival, on October 18, 2009 at the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Harman Center for the Arts, to an audience full of girls and boys excited to see an African-American feature-length film, which are few and far between in our community. In this film Trimel plays the role of "Felicia," who convinces her thirtysomething girlfriends to come out (of the closet) within 30 days. I spent the day with Trimel, and was surprised by her honesty. She mentioned being hurt by some reviews of *Family*, and expressed her belief that the film is the best reflection of her and her wit.

SWERV: Why acting? Why cast yourself in your own movies?
Faith Trimel: I always wanted to be an actress. People say different, but I know otherwise: There is kind of a prejudice [against] dark-skinned women. I don't have to apologize for wanting to be a leading woman—the love interest, or whatever. I wanted to be what I dreamed to be, which is the highest rung. I never really gave it the college try to go out and get those parts, but I kinda sensed it would be a waste to try, since they were dominated by beautiful biracial [women]. You know... I'm not taking anything away from them, but that has really been the norm.

You have the primary lead [in* Family*]?
FT: I'm technically in just about every scene. I'm the one who engages with every actress in the ensemble. Felicia has a one-on-one with all the leads, and sometimes two. What I am is the bone structure that holds up the Felicia character. She is the true issue of coming out; how you do it when you're in love with someone while you're denying [your relationship].

How does one direct and act at the same time?
FT: You do very detailed pre-production as I did, and you direct your movie by getting your shots set up and getting your actors where they need to be. Then you take a little time away, which I didn't always have the time to do, to get into your character. You then step on set and call action.

How did you get into filmmaking?
FT: I'd written a short script when I was in college, *Black Aura on an Angel*. Spirit told me to do so, and I just followed. On a whim I submitted to festivals, and it got picked up by NewFest [LGBT film festival] in New York City. Then one by one [more festivals] fell and invited me. I was bitten by the bug; the process of making it. It's one of the toughest, most pleasurable things—simultaneously. I was hooked, but I was afraid of the next project that was in me.

What year was* Black Aura *made?
FT: *Black Aura* was actually written in 1998 when I was in college. It was shot in 2003.

Why did you fear producing* Family*?
FT: Because it was very ambitious, and I barely had enough money to keep gas in my car. [I thought], "How am I gonna make this movie with all these people, and I don't really know how to make a movie?" *Black Aura* helped me do the first leap, but still the expense and time it took to make *Black Aura*... I said, "Oh, my God, if this smaller piece with just three major characters—and I'm one of them—is taking this much energy and effort, how on earth am I gonna make this movie?"

I wrote the first draft [of *Family*] in 2005. I think by 2007 I actually broke down and cried, thinking, "Is this ever gonna happen?" [But] something was in the air in 2008. I [put it out] to the universe, and decided to lead aggressively. That whole "leap, and the net will appear." I put the casting out. I got some donations through a web site I built for the Angel fund, seed money, which was sparse, but I can do a lot with a little. I've lived very effectively in high states of deprivation.

Why do you say that?
FT: That's a sad legacy of my childhood, which is that [it] was very modest and at times very destitute. We didn't have anything. I was a very precocious child. I was always in honors programs—one of those kids in the honors program with all this homework, and then I would go home and we wouldn't have electricity. I'd be doing it by candlelight. I'd go to school and pretend I was equal, up to par with everyone else, but I was underfed, undernurtured and stuff like that. No one ever was the wiser about my handicaps in terms of excelling. That's my nature. No matter how many handicaps, my goal is to excel, get beyond, and push through.

What was your coming out process?
FT: I wish I could say it was a trumpet. It had a boldness about it but I don't think I'll ever know [the full truth]. I told my mother in a letter. I wished I could have told her face to face, but I lived in Atlanta and she lived in Chicago. She returned an extraordinary letter. She said, "I love you, and I'm just happy that you are happy. Are you?" It was real positive all around. Of course, there's been thorny parts and other things that you have to negotiate with your family.

Are the actors in* Family *lesbians?
FT: No, most aren't. It's funny, when I tell people I'm not lesbian they think I'm saying I'm not gay, but I'm out and proud. Lesbian is a woman with a woman-centric life. I don't spend time around women, though I love them. I have romantic interests, and the rest of the time is usually spent with heterosexual men because that is [who] I resonate best with.

How did you create a movie about the girlfriend bond?
FT: *Family* for me is more than one-on-one moments. Usually I have these dynamic female relations, but I never actually had a clique of girls [in real life].

Then it's interesting that you made such a film.
FT: It's a wish.

Family is currently showing at film festivals around the country. To find out when it will hit your town, go to www.myspace.com/familythefilm or www.familythefilm.net

FROM BOIS TO MAN

Words/Patricia Corbett

Novelist Laurinda Brown, author of *Fire & Brimstone*, *Undercover*, *Walk Like a Man*, *Strapped* and The *Highest Price for Passion*, has moved from self-publishing her first books to landing a major publisher. Now riding the success of her Lambda Literary Award-winning *Walk Like a Man*, the Memphis native is nearing the end of a four-year countrywide tour of *Walk Like a Man — The Play*, even landing off-Broadway at the Crowne Theatre in New York City.

Walk Like a Man — The Play strings together vignettes that reflect different perspectives of lesbian life. "I chose vignettes that related to deep issues in the book *WLAM*," says Brown. "Same-sex domestic violence and child sexual abuse are topics you never expect to see portrayed on stage by lesbians." Brown felt a sense of responsibility to "tell our stories as honestly and openly as I can," she says. "I tried to paint a picture that doesn't distort who we are. Whatever stereotypes are out there, I tried to go against them."

And while she doesn't advertise her own sexuality, she doesn't deny who she is and doesn't back down from exploring the many facets of women in lesbian relationships. She considers herself an observer of people. Her subjects are inspired by true stories, although she adds that she doesn't choose the characters or stories; they typically choose her. While her personal goal is "to obtain and retain peace" in her life, professionally she aspires "to have a positive impact" through writing about the communities that she represents.

Most of Brown's supporters may not be aware that she jumped headfirst into the production of *WLAM*, preparing it for stage in just six weeks with only a few investors. Eventually she would obtain sponsors, but much of the funding for the play came directly from her own pockets. Brown was also saddled with the high production cost of touring. "I made it my personal business to generate tickets sales so that the play would end its four-year run in the black," she says. Brown has continued to work as a full-time grant writer while *WLAM* has been in production.

Brown admits that producing *Walk Like a Man—The Play* was ambitious and demanding; she had never written a play before. However, not having any playwriting experience was just one of the many challenges. "Putting on a play is more than just pulling together an ensemble, getting a venue and doing a show," Brown says. "So many people don't seem to get that. The other challenge is dealing with the different personalities, and it is probably the latter one that made me step back for a minute."

Brown recalls how she didn't expect personality clashes, although she was warned that working with a cast of women could prove difficult. Theater is grueling, and her admitted quest for perfection brought out a side of her and some of her cast members that created some behind-the-scenes drama. "I looked in the mirror and did some serious reflecting. *WLAM* has truly been a learning experience," she says.

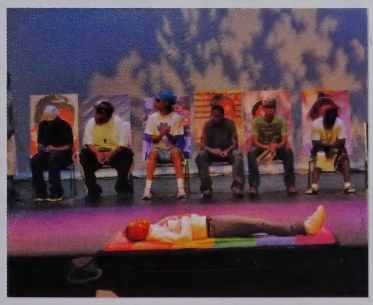
Citing the usual cast controversy and occasional personal interactions that made the experience somewhat difficult at times, Brown reveals that casting some older women has helped to subdue some of those problems and has brought a different energy to the show. In fact, there is only one surviving member of her original cast of *Walk Like a Man — The Play*. "For the most part, it was an extremely pleasurable experience because I watched a lot of women change," Brown says. "It was amazing to see so many lesbians come out to support my project." She was also excited to see relationships forged among cast members that would probably never happen outside of *WLAM*. Brown believes that the production provided an opportunity for people to be who they were even though she had cast members who were not out with their sexuality.

The financial and mental demands have weighed heavily on her, but at the end of four years Brown sees the positive aspects of producing the play. "I've found joy and comfort in my craft because it entertains and inspires others," she says. And the audience response has been phenomenal; Brown still receives requests to take the play to California and other parts of the country. She has also been asked to return to off-Broadway.

With all this activity and acclaim, one would think Brown might rest on her laurels, but she is in the process of producing a new play, *Bois Don't Cry*. *Bois Don't Cry* is comprised of a series of dramatic monologues told by "studs" or women who identify more with male gender expression. Brown describes the play as a glimpse into the lives of these women through nine monologues. While she admits that the impetus for the play is based on her exploration of her own gender identity, the play is based on personal testimonies from other women. One particular story is that of a transgender man and his transition. According to Brown, listening to the stories of various studs or bois has helped her to reach one of her most profound realizations: "Gender and sexuality are two different things." Although she plans to produce the play only once, Brown is considering a tour and is in negotiation with a management company.

Besides working on *Bois Don't Cry*, Brown is writing another novel, but she won't reveal what kind. "I don't like to identify with a particular genre because I've found that I write for everybody—gay or straight," she says. "I've written urban fiction, historical fiction and contemporary fiction. I don't like to limit myself." Clearly there are no limits to Brown's energy, either. Having added playwright, director and producer to her skill set, Brown continues to move forward.

Laurinda Brown may be contacted at walklikeaman2006@aol.com, www.myspace.com/wlam2007atlanta and on Facebook.



All photos courtesty of Laurinda D. Brown

USE OF TRUVADA:

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor and combines EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate [DF]) in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat adults with HIV-1 infection.

TRUVADA® does not cure HIV-1 infection or lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to others. **TRUVADA should not be used with** ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir DF 300 mg), VIREAD®, EMTRIVA®, Combivir® (lamivudine/zidovudine), Epivir® or Epivir-HBV® (lamivudine), Epzicom® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), or Trizivir® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine) because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients. TRUVADA should not be used with HEPSERA® (adefovir dipivoxil).

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of the following side effects or conditions while taking TRUVADA:

- **Nausea, vomiting, unusual muscle pain, and/or weakness. These may be signs of a buildup of acid in the blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious medical condition**
- **Light colored stools, dark colored urine, and/or if your skin or the whites of your eyes turn yellow. These may be signs of serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity), with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly), and fat in the liver (steatosis)**
- **If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B virus (HBV) and stop taking TRUVADA, your liver disease may suddenly get worse. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months.**
- If you have had kidney problems or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys
- Lab tests show changes in the bones of patients treated with VIREAD, a medicine in TRUVADA. If you have had bone problems in the past, talk to your healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA. Also, bone pain and softening of the bone (which may contribute to fractures) may occur as a consequence of kidney problems.

Changes in body fat have been seen in some people taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines.

If you notice any symptoms of infection soon after you start HIV treatment, talk to your doctor right away.

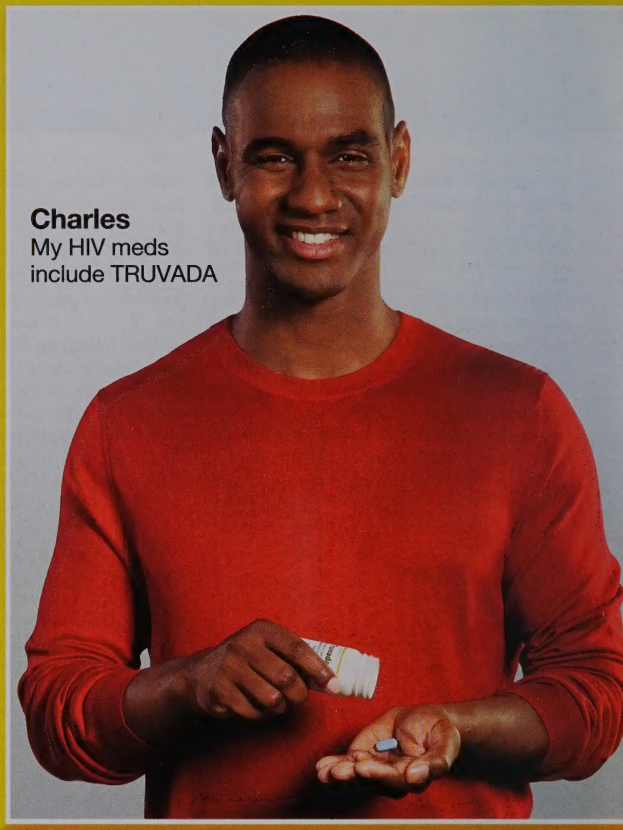
The most common side effects of the medicines in TRUVADA when taken with other anti-HIV-1 medicines are diarrhea, dizziness, nausea, headache, fatigue, abnormal dreams, sleeping problems, rash, depression, and vomiting. Additional side effects are kidney problems (including decline or failure of kidney function), inflammation of the pancreas, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, shortness of breath, pain, fatty liver, stomach pain, weakness, indigestion, and intestinal gas. High volume of urine and thirst, muscle pain and muscle weakness due to kidney problems have been reported. Skin discoloration (spots and freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

Discuss all medicines you take with your healthcare provider and be aware: Your healthcare provider may need to follow you more closely or adjust your therapy if you are taking Videx® or Videx® EC (didanosine), Reyataz® (atazanavir sulfate), or Kaletra® (lopinavir/ritonavir) with TRUVADA.

Please see Patient Information on next page, including **"What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"**.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

I feel positive



In combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults

References: 1. Based on data from PHAST retail monthly data; September 2005-October 2008; Wolters Kluwer Health.

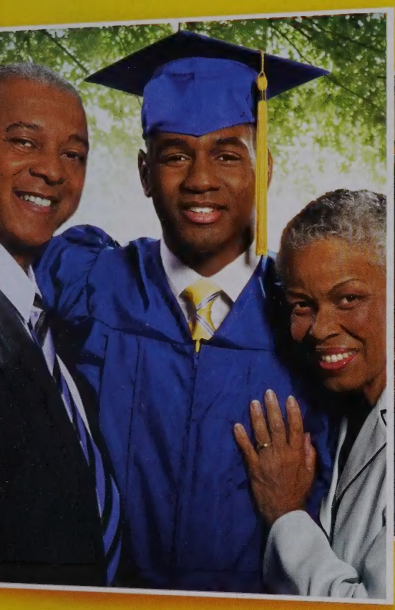
TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, and VIREAD are trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc.
ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC.
All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

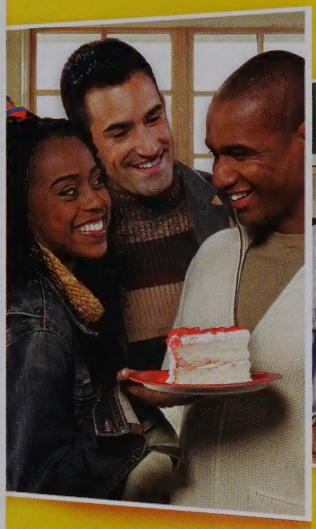
GILEAD

© 2009 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT553 02/09

#1 prescribed HIV med by doctors[1]

about my future. TRUVADA helps make it possible.





Individual results may vary.

With *once a day* TRUVADA for my HIV, I can plan for long-term success.

- Proven over the long term to reduce viral load to undetectable (<400 copies/mL) and increase CD4 cell count in 3 years of a clinical study
- Established long-term safety and tolerability

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

Ask your doctor about TRUVADA and go to www.TRUVADA.com.

Truvada® (GILEAD)

200 mg emtricitabine · tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg

Think long term.* Starting now.

*Through 3 years of a clinical study.

Patient Information

TRUVADA® (tru-VAH-dah) tablets

Generic name: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
(em tri SIT uh bean and te NOE' fo veer
dye soe PROX il FYOU mar ate)

Read the Patient Information that comes with TRUVADA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. You should stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA. **Do not change or stop your medicine without first talking with your healthcare provider.** Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about TRUVADA.

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?

- **Some people who have taken medicine like TRUVADA (nucleoside analogs) have developed a serious condition called lactic acidosis** (build up of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of lactic acidosis.**
  - You feel very weak or tired.
  - You have unusual (not normal) muscle pain.
  - You have trouble breathing.
  - You have stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
  - You feel cold, especially in your arms and legs.
  - You feel dizzy or lightheaded.
  - You have a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Some people who have taken medicines like TRUVADA have developed serious liver problems called hepatotoxicity,** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of liver problems.**
  - Your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice).
  - Your urine turns dark.
  - Your bowel movements (stools) turn light in color.
  - You don't feel like eating food for several days or longer.
  - You feel sick to your stomach (nausea).
  - You have lower stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking nucleoside analog medicines, like TRUVADA, for a long time.
- **If you are also infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV),** you need close medical follow-up for several months after stopping treatment with TRUVADA. Follow-up includes medical exams and blood tests to check for HBV that could be getting worse. **Patients with Hepatitis B Virus infection, who take TRUVADA and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. A "flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before.**

What is TRUVADA?

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). TRUVADA contains 2 medicines, EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, or tenofovir DF) combined in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with HIV-1 infection. TRUVADA is for adults age 18 and older. TRUVADA has not been studied in children under age 18 or adults over age 65.

HIV infection destroys $CD4^+$ T cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

TRUVADA helps block HIV-1 reverse transcriptase, a chemical in your body (enzyme) that is needed for HIV-1 to multiply. TRUVADA lowers the amount of HIV-1 in the blood (viral load). TRUVADA may also help to increase the number of T cells ($CD4^+$ cells). Lowering the amount of HIV-1 in the blood lowers the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of TRUVADA are not known at this time. People taking TRUVADA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium complex* (MAC) infection. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking TRUVADA.**

TRUVADA does not lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take TRUVADA?

- Do not take TRUVADA if you are allergic to TRUVADA or any of its ingredients. The active ingredients of TRUVADA are emtricitabine and tenofovir DF. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA if you are already taking ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg), Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA to treat your HIV infection if you are also taking HEPSERA® (adefovir dipivoxil) to treat your HBV infection.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- **are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** We do not know if TRUVADA can harm your unborn child. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if TRUVADA is right for you. If you use TRUVADA while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can be on the TRUVADA Antiviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **are breast-feeding.** You should not breast feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Also, it is not known if TRUVADA can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **have kidney problems or are undergoing kidney dialysis treatment.**
- **have bone problems.**
- **have liver problems including Hepatitis B Virus infection.**

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- Videx, Videx EC (didanosine). Tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) may increase the amount of Videx in your blood. **You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Videx together.** Also, the dose of didanosine may need to be reduced.
- Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate) or Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir). These medicines may increase the amount of tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) in your blood, which could result in more side effects. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz or Kaletra together. TRUVADA may decrease the amount of Reyataz in your blood. If you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz together, you should also be taking Norvir (ritonavir).

Keep a complete list of all the medicines that you take. Make a new list when medicines are added or stopped. Give copies of this list to all of your healthcare providers and pharmacist **every** time you visit your healthcare provider or fill a prescription.

How should I take TRUVADA?

- Take TRUVADA exactly as your healthcare provider prescribed it. Follow the directions from your healthcare provider, exactly as written on the label.
- The usual dose of TRUVADA is 1 tablet once a day. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines. If you have kidney problems, you may need to take TRUVADA less often.
- TRUVADA may be taken with or without a meal. Food does not affect how TRUVADA works. Take TRUVADA at the same time each day.
- If you forget to take TRUVADA, take it as soon as you remember that day. **Do not** take more than 1 dose of TRUVADA in a day. **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time. Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure what to do. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of TRUVADA or your anti-HIV-1 medicines.**
- When your TRUVADA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to TRUVADA and become harder to treat.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TRUVADA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA.
- If you take too much TRUVADA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking TRUVADA?

- **Do not breast-feed.** See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?"
- **Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection** since TRUVADA does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.
  - **Do not share needles or other injection equipment.**
  - **Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes or razor blades.**
  - **Do not have any kind of sex without protection.** Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to reduce the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- ATRIPLA (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg), Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA (emtricitabine), Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate).

  TRUVADA should not be used with these medicines.
- TRUVADA should not be used with HEPSERA (adefovir dipivoxil).

What are the possible side effects of TRUVADA?

TRUVADA may cause the following serious side effects (see "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"):

- **Lactic acidosis** (buildup of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your doctor right away if you get signs of lactic acidosis.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **Serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity),** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any signs of liver problems. (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")

- **"Flare-ups" of Hepatitis B Virus infection,** in which the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before, can occur if you stop taking TRUVADA (emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate). Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months after stopping TRUVADA if you have both HIV-1 and HBV infection. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of Hepatitis B Virus infection. If you have advanced liver disease and stop treatment with TRUVADA, the "flare-up" of hepatitis B may cause your liver function to decline.
- **Kidney problems.** If you have had kidney problems in the past or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys.
- **Changes in bone mineral density (thinning bones).** Laboratory tests show changes in the bones of patients treated with VIREAD (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate), a component of TRUVADA. If you have had bone problems in the past, your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bone mineral density or may prescribe medicines to help your bone mineral density. Additionally, bone pain and softening of the bone (which may contribute to fractures) may occur as a consequence of kidney problems.

Other side effects with TRUVADA when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines include:

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the main part of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effect of these conditions are not known at this time.
- In some patients with advanced HIV infection (AIDS), signs and symptoms of inflammation from previous infections may occur soon after anti-HIV treatment is started. It is believed that these symptoms are due to an improvement in the body's immune response, enabling the body to fight infections that may have been present with no obvious symptoms. If you notice any symptoms of infection, please inform your doctor immediately.

The most common side effects of EMTRIVA (emtricitabine) or VIREAD when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines are: diarrhea, dizziness, nausea, headache, fatigue, abnormal dreams, sleeping problems, rash, depression, and vomiting. Additional side effects are lactic acidosis, kidney problems (including decline or failure of kidney function), inflammation of the pancreas, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, shortness of breath, pain, fatty liver, stomach pain, weakness, indigestion, intestinal gas, and high volume of urine and thirst caused by kidney problems. Muscle pain and muscle weakness, bone pain, and softening of the bone (which may contribute to fractures) as a consequence of kidney problems have been reported. Skin discoloration (small spots or freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

These are not all the side effects of TRUVADA (emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate). If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider right away. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

How do I store TRUVADA?

- **Keep TRUVADA and all other medicines out of reach of children.**
- Store TRUVADA at room temperature 77 °F (25 °C).
- Keep TRUVADA in its original container and keep the container tightly closed.
- Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. If you throw any medicines away make sure that children will not find them.

General information about TRUVADA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use TRUVADA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TRUVADA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about TRUVADA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about TRUVADA that is written for health professionals. For more information, you may also call 1-800-GILEAD-5 or access the TRUVADA website at www.TRUVADA.com.

Do not use TRUVADA if seal over bottle opening is broken or missing.

What are the ingredients of TRUVADA?

Active Ingredients: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

Inactive Ingredients: Croscarmellose sodium, lactose monohydrate, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and pregelatinized starch (gluten free). The tablets are coated with Opadry II Blue Y-30-10701 containing FD&C Blue #2 aluminum lake, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose 2910, lactose monohydrate, titanium dioxide, and triacetin.

Rx Only

November 2008

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, HEPSERA and VIREAD are registered trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc. ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC. All other trademarks referenced herein are the property of their respective owners.

21-752-GS-022 041108

Marcel Says: Hello

Words/Photo/Michael-Christopher

If it weren't for Marcel Emerson's love of fiction, he'd be pulling teeth right now. Literally. The Seattle-born and raised author of *My Eyes Are Green* originally came to Washington, D.C. to attend Howard University's dental program, but things didn't work out as planned. Emerson ended up failing a class his first year because he was "having too much fun" hanging out at the many well-known D.C. clubs and lounges. During his second year, Emerson failed two more classes, which he credits to reading novels during lectures. Clearly, his heart was not in the mouth, and with three classes down the tubes, Howard University made the decision Emerson could not make for himself: It was time to go.

Emerson was also dealing with the demise of a two-and-a-half-year relationship. "I thought, 'this is it,'" he recalls, thinking he'd found his life partner and that their happily ever after was written in stone. Sadly, his much older, military lover went AWOL, leaving Emerson hurt and bitter. His swirling emotions found solace in the Erykah Badu song, "Green Eyes" from the *Mama's Gun* CD. The bluesy opening declares, "My eyes are green / 'cuz I eats a lot of vegetables / it don't have nothing to do / with your new friend." Emerson's connection to the song's back and forth of being over the pain and slipping back into hurt sparked something in him. He knew that would be the title of his debut novel.

My Eyes Are Green was a long time coming. Life, work and school got in the way, putting fiction writing on the back burner in lieu of writing twenty-page papers. After receiving his master's degree in business administration, Emerson gained the free time and discipline to finish his story. He didn't write directly about his own experience, but instead drew inspiration from some of the problems and issues that friends and co-workers were going through.

In *Eyes*, one of the main characters, Dontae, a Georgetown Law School freshman, begins a relationship with the charming Darrel, only to have love put on hold by the death of Darrel's father. Darrel vanishes, but comes back later with a pregnant wife, and an offer to continue his relationship with Dontae.

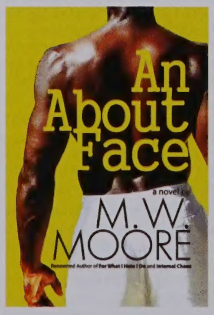
Emerson's second novel came about through another process. "I hadn't planned on writing another book," he admits. "Folks wanted more. This was me trying to be an author—to see if I had the magic to write another story." Seemingly spellbound, Emerson churned out *You Had Me at Hello* just five months after the Jerry McGuire-inspired title came to him.

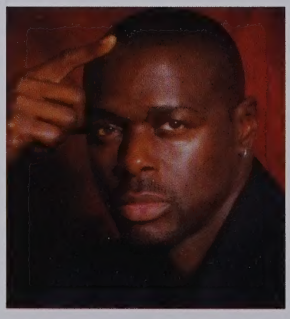
Being a two-time author doesn't get in the way of Emerson attending his book club. Even though he's been on the road promoting he makes sure he's in town every second Saturday to discuss their selection of the month. Book club member Lee Hayes (author of *Passion Marks*, *A Deeper Blue* and *Messiah*) has acted as mentor to Emerson, helping to enhance Emerson's writing and editing.

One thing that has changed for Emerson is having to come out of his comfort zone and promote himself. "I've been hustlin'," he says. "I've had to go up to strangers, telling them I have a book and what it's about. Many times it's cold sales. I feel like a telemarketer sometimes!"

Hopefully, like the title says, he'll greet them with his boyish smile and will have them at hello.

M.W. Moore's Turnaround





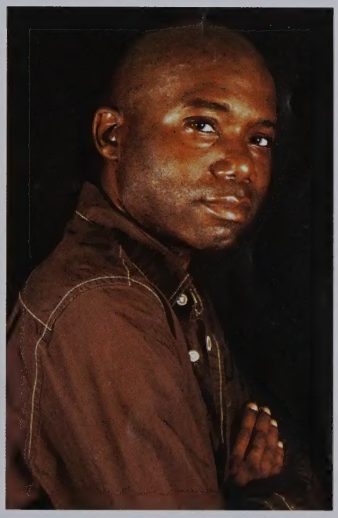
An About Face is the final installment of a trilogy that tracks a turbulent life from youth to adulthood. The previous releases, *For What I Hate I Do* and *Internal Chaos*, are part of the semi-fictional storyline of protagonist Miguel Morris, whose life closely mirrors that of the author, M.W. Moore. The three novels detail the conflicts, consequences of sexual addictions, drug binges and imprisonment suffered by Moore.

The final years of prison don't get any easier for Miguel, a former NCAA track athlete, as forces continue to derail his hopes for early freedom. He's still tested by guards, fellow inmates and the bruising sun as he slaves on the prison work farm. But in this volume, he's trying to avoid mistakes due to unresolved sexual addictions.

Once paroled, he quickly finds employment and hits pay dirt when an Internet design firm hires him as a technician despite his felony conviction for six bank robberies. He later attempts a relationship with Jasmine, leaving behind wounded ex-lover and confidante, Lazlo, that causes embers to fly. Notwithstanding financial success, he relearns the brutality of the free world when jealous colleagues Carlton and Eva hurl sexual innuendos and threaten him with blackmail, jeopardizing his attempt at true love.

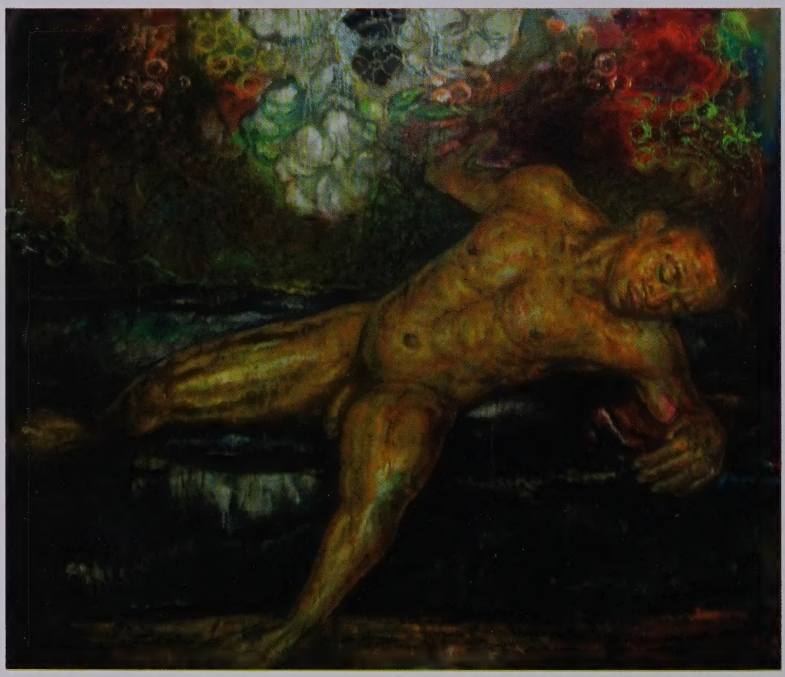
PORTRAIT MASTER

Words/Michael-Christopher
Photos/ Omar Mariluz



At age 14, budding artist Ricardo Francis was happy using his talent toward his goal of being a comic book artist. Luckily, his art teacher showed him another option; he took Francis under his wing as an apprentice painter. The practice paid off; at 33 Francis is well on his way to being a master.

["The Uncomplicated Womb"]



Francis was born and raised in Houston, Texas, which he describes as a very religious and conservative environment. "[But] my family didn't beat it into me," he says. "They allowed me free will to think." That free will led him to the Maryland Institute College of Art as a painting major, then to New York City where he would settle into his craft and life as a working artist.

His growing body of visual art is done primarily in oils, and usually depicts a male nude of color. Francis himself is of black and Panamanian heritage, which he says are "two groups who are usually misrepresented and hypersexualized in the media." He continues, "When you take off the clothes, race, class and culture come off as well. When you look, you see more of a true person, not a fetish."

Francis began painting with many sociopolitical issues in mind, but now he's more focused on the figure; "the person is the theme itself," he says. Francis photographs models and then renders his paintings from the reference. In the self-portrait, "The Uncomplicated Womb," [page 21] Francis "brings it" from both sides of the canvas. "I needed to have a photo shoot. I put myself in a window and when I saw the photograph, I just loved it," he says. "I decided to recreate it as a painting." He says the painting depicts a man pondering self-reflection and his own design.

"Echo" [bottom left] was a lesson for Francis. He admits that he almost threw the painting away, but instead took the challenge of concentration it presented. Although he had an idea of what the piece was going to be, things were panning out quite differently, leaving him feeling discouraged. "['Echo'] taught me how to stretch myself," he says. "It really kicked my ass to focus on painting from the gut instead of worrying about the planning."

["The Golden Room," above; "Echo," left]

["Reverie"]

To learn more about Ricardo Francis and his art, visit www.apanamae.com

Francis, also an accomplished performance artist, put together "¿Qué Hora Es?" in 2002, a multimedia project incorporating spoken word, movement, dance and art installation. He also created "The Anonymous Life" in '03, a one-act "internal monologue" in which a married man discovers his same-sex attraction. The piece examines how many men of color feel the need to recreate the life of a straight man in order to function in society, while also depicting the positive and negative aspects of a gay existence.

EMBRACING CHANGE:

A BRAVE SOUL SPEAKS

Words/Monte J. Wolfe

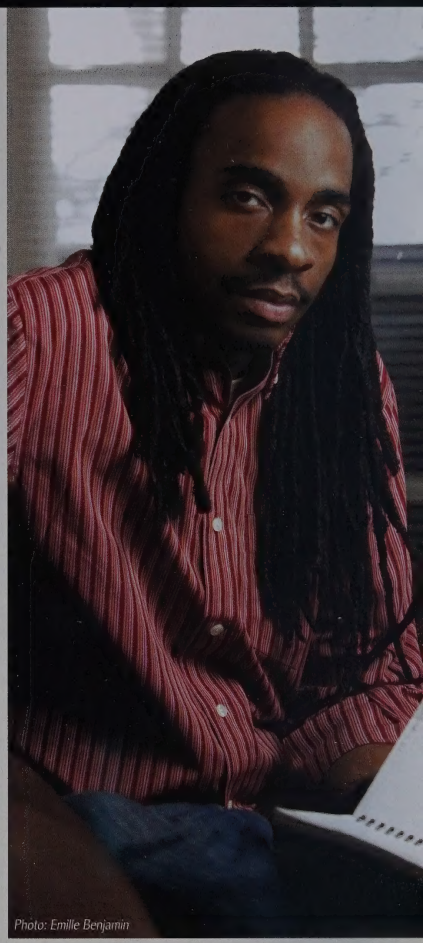


Photo: Emille Benjamin

My name is Monte Jermaine Wolfe. I am an artist. I am also a black gay man living with HIV. In 2006 I embarked on a journey that would change the course of my life. For many years prior I had experienced a number of challenging, memorable experiences, but this particular year would be a pivotal one. That February I became a parent…but not in the traditional sense. I was charged with creating something that would not only affect me, but many other individuals. With the assistance of two of my fellow black, gay, HIV-positive brethren, Erik Chambers and Tim'm T. West, I founded Brave Soul Collective (BSC), an education, outreach and support organization with a focus on HIV/AIDS outreach through the performing and literary arts.

When the idea originally came to me I was not only frightened, but certain that I couldn't do it alone. As the details developed, it became clear to me that nothing that was unfolding was solely about me; it was about something much larger. Even though my fears and insecurities tried to overshadow the inspiration as it came, I quickly got clear about what was happening. Everything that I had experienced up until then—including but not limited to bouts with depression, suicide attempts, low self-esteem, coming to grips with my sexuality and HIV status—all made sense in that holy instant. I'd survived a wealth of painful situations and circumstances and it was time to put all of those things to use in order to heal, and then share the process by which I was able to do so with the world through the vehicle of the arts.

Thus, in May of 2006 Brave Soul Collective was born.

In the beginning, creating BSC was about Tim'm, Erik and I being able to embrace, express and be proud of ourselves and all that came along with our lives as artists, as black gay men and as people living with HIV. The level of acceptance and overall response that we received from simply being honest and speaking our truths was liberating and refreshing, to say the least. The greatest gift has been that, as a result of each of us being open and honest about certain parts of our lives, others have been given the permission and courage to do the same.

Fast forward three years to the present and, inevitably, a lot has changed professionally and personally. Now at 35 I can admit that one of the most challenging things I've had to repeatedly deal with in life has been change. Shortly after BSC was created, three became two. Initially, I had a very difficult time with the departure of Erik Chambers as an active member of BSC, largely because we had been friends for nearly six years before embarking on the journey that came along with the creation of the organization. What I would come to understand was that his departure had nothing to do with me, nor was it something I could control or fix. It was simply something that happened and I had to move forward with what I had been called to do regardless.

Since then, Tim'm and I have continued to move forward with writing, performing and facilitating BSC performances, gatherings and workshops nationwide. Over the course of the last three years we've also managed to create a safe space for individuals (from all walks of life) to gather on a monthly basis to dialogue, share and communicate with one another about topics that include sexuality, racism, mental and emotional wellness, spirituality and many other relevant issues.

A lot has changed personally as well. When I began the process of creating BSC, I had been single for quite some time. I'm now in a relationship that is nearing the two-year mark. There have been rewards, challenges and even more opportunities to heal that have come along with being in a relationship. The majority of it I've been able to process, discuss and share through my work with BSC.

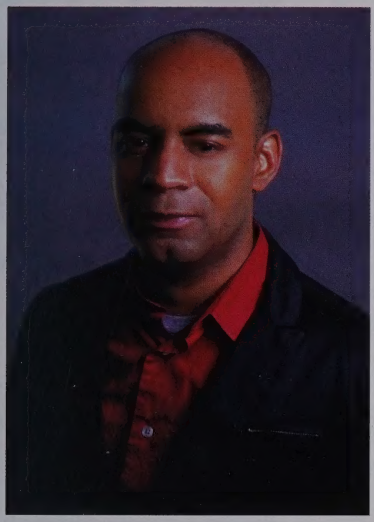
Over the past three years, I've learned how to operate from a much more practical head space, specifically by staying open to whatever happens. Serving as the artistic/managing director of a grassroots organization has presented a wealth of challenges for me. Making a living as a working artist is an art in and of itself. It's truly been a process of trial and error. Much of my time is spent moving literally from one thing to another. Early on, I tried to do everything. Sometimes I was successful, other times I fell short. Thankfully all of the events and performances we've produced have enabled me to understand that I can't do it all alone, nor do I have to.

What I sometimes still forget is that BSC is now a living, breathing thing with arms that reach much further than even I can see in many ways. I liken my experience to that of someone learning how to be a parent for the first time. Mistakes are a part of the process and as hard as it is to do, sometimes all that is required is to let go. What happens from there is nothing short of miraculous.

For more on Brave Soul Collective, please visit http://www.bravesoulcollective.org/bsc.

PASSING THE TORCH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

Words/Isaiah Webster III - Photo/MC



As the 30th anniversary of the discovery of AIDS approaches, many advocates are experiencing some serious burnout—even those of us who have been fighting the epidemic for only the last ten years. I am, at this moment, approximately 32,000 feet in the air traveling to San Francisco for United States Conference on AIDS (USCA), an annual meeting of HIV/AIDS prevention, advocacy and treatment professionals. This marks my fifth overall trip to USCA and my third as a presenter.

My colleagues and I do get tired. The reasons for advocates' burnout are many: information fatigue, condom fatigue, activism fatigue, community organizing fatigue… It all adds up. But as our complacency and fatigue grows, so does the epidemic.

African-Americans, and especially black gay men, continue to see their infection rates increase. Though rates have had temporary periods of decline or leveling off, they always rebound upward. If we want to make serious advancements in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, the approach has to be three-fold.

First, there needs to be more HIV-prevention interventions developed specifically for the African-American LGBT community. While adapting existing programs is always an option, providers should have a full buffet of programs to choose from, not just a few. Our community is talented enough and resourceful enough to develop dynamic prevention programs. Every population and sub-population in our community deserves HIV-prevention interventions that are created with them in mind, in order to address their challenges, hopes and fears.

Second, we must take a holistic approach to our prevention efforts. This means taking a serious look at the demons that are ever-present in our community. As black gay people, it is vital that we address our issues with internalized homophobia, racism, lack of adequate health care, the role of faith and family, and abuse. Growing up black in America is tough. Growing up black and poor in America is really tough. But growing up black, poor and gay in America presents a serious challenge. Of course it's possible to emerge from this dealt hand with a full house, but it requires self-reflection and, most of all, support.

Finally, we must pass along everything we know about this epidemic to the next generation. I'm a decent cook. I'm not nearly the cook that my grandmother was when she was alive, but what little I know about making a lemon meringue pie from scratch I learned from her. The next generation of black gay people, defined as those who are coming of age now, will be charged with ending this epidemic. It is their calling.

In the absence of mass deaths and widespread opportunistic infections as seen in the 1980s, it's difficult for today's generation to see and feel the impact of AIDS. As the disease becomes more manageable, it becomes more of the fabric of our lives, more "normal." The days before advanced medications and accessible AIDS service organizations were pure hell. It would be criminal of us not to do everything we can to convey what we've learned with those who are following in our footsteps. Textbooks and Google searches are no match for personal stories and interpersonal connections.

With each trip to USCA, I see old friends and make new ones. It's amazing how inspirational the work of others can be to your own. At this conference and in the days ahead, I will press my peers to find new solutions to an old problem, new solutions that include this three-fold approach. Our future depends on it.

Isaiah Webster III is the director of capacity building for Metro TeenAIDS.

FROM THE WEST

Continued from page 13

one that is age-old. But with the introduction of Gabourey "Gabby" Sidibe in the starring role of *Precious*, I think there is an opportunity to have a more honest dialogue and to see if Hollywood is ready to embrace a real big girl.

In 2006, Jennifer Hudson was the sassy, big It Girl. She had an extraordinary award show run that ended with a Best Supporting Actress Oscar. Every time she showed up on the red carpet, the words "curvy" and "voluptuous" weren't too far behind. In reality the big girls in the rest of the country couldn't help laughing. On her biggest day Jennifer Hudson was a size 16, but more likely usually a 14. What was the big deal? She didn't look any different than the girl that lived next door.

Well, this award season is being dominated by one Gabourey Sidibe and there is no doubt, tipping the scale at 300 pounds, that she is an authentic big girl. But what is interesting is how the discussion about Gabby's body has been framed in the context of her alter ego, Precious. It's as if they don't share the same body. In the litany of reviews the word "obese" is flung around liberally as they describe her character, Clareece Precious Jones, but in interviews with Gabby the writers consistently remark how "different" she is from the character she portrays in the blistering movie. The difference is her bubbly personality, her Valley Girl voice, the sense that she has somehow escaped the cruelty of adolescence. But most critics don't take the honest next step and say what is the same: her weight. Interview after interview, she is filling out every square inch of her sized-for-her designer dress. She is taking up every square inch of the chair that is provided for her during the press junket. But no one dares speak it. Is it because there is legitimate concern that Gabby truly is obese? That they see nothing attractive about her (which I think is absolutely not true)? Or that there is no language in the Hollywood lexicon to describe her? To say she is "curvy" or "voluptuous" (in Hollywood-speak) would be dishonest. So it is simply ignored.

And that is a shame. In many ways Gabby is breaking new ground for actresses larger than a size 22. She is the perfect example: American filmgoers are ready to pay their money to see a woman that has not been created by the Hollywood starlet machine and may not necessarily be relegated to the character parts reserved for the not-so-beautiful or skinny people. The blogosphere has been on fire regarding this very topic. Bloggers have not been shy about talking about Gabby's weight, but the discussions have taken disturbing turns. What starts out as a critique of Precious quickly devolves into screeds on Gabby's weight and how it somehow diminishes her credible performance. The argument is that because she started out "fat" she is not really acting. Really?

With that kind of illogical and unfair criticism I can't help but wonder what is next for her. Will she go the way of Hattie McDaniel or will Hollywood loosen its belt and make room for a remarkable new talent that couldn't find a size 24 dress on Rodeo Drive to save her life?

JUMP TO IT!

Words/Reico Walker of Walker Fitness

One of the best workouts for weight loss is a fighter's workout. A fighter's conditioning has to be pushed to the edge so that when in battle they can push through fatigue. One of my favorites is jumping rope. It's inexpensive with priceless results—and fun!

Jump rope training will enhance:

- Coordination
- Agility
- Speed
- Endurance

Ropes

You can purchase a quality jump rope for $6 or less. To top it off, you can easily pack a jump rope with you no matter where you travel.

I recommend a lightweight plastic speed rope. These ropes are more effective than heavier leather ropes and weighted ropes. The speed rope will allow you to maintain a much faster spinning pace.

Next determine its ideal length. Common rope lengths range from 8 to 10 feet. Most ropes that you find will be 9 feet. A 9-foot rope will be long enough for most athletes who are 6 feet tall or shorter. Athletes over 6 feet tall may require a 10-foot rope.

Typically, you may need to adjust your rope. I often snip 2 or 3 inches off a 9-foot rope to increase its speed (per my height). One way to determine the ideal length is to step one foot in the middle of the rope. The handles should reach up to approximately armpit height. Trim one inch at a time and test each length.

Jumping Surface

I recommend jumping rope on a shock-absorbent surface such as a wood floor, gym mat, outdoor track or tennis court. In addition, you should wear a quality pair or cross-training shoes when skipping rope.

It is important that you become proficient with the rope before using it as a conditioning tool. If you have never jumped rope before, you can expect some initial frustration. You must first view your rope sessions as skill workouts. You need to develop skill with the rope, and then add it to your conditioning arsenal.

Start with frequent, short jump rope sessions. For example, start with 20-second intervals on the rope. Just try to skip for 20 seconds without tripping on the rope. Keep the intervals brief, and stop before fatigue mounts. The body is much more capable of learning when it is fresh, not fatigued.

Perform these skill emphasis sessions regularly. Frequent practice is recommended. Eventually, you will move past 20 seconds, and begin working with 1-, 2- and 3-minute rounds. Many boxers will skip rope for several rounds during each training session. Rest for 30 to 60 seconds between each round.

For example:

- 6 sets of 3-minute rounds of jump rope
- Rest 60 seconds between rounds

Rope Skipping Styles

Running in place with the rope is one of the easiest rope skipping patterns to learn. You will remain stationary, lifting the knees high with each turn of the rope.

Double under is another popular skipping pattern. To perform a double under, you will make two turns of the rope for every one jump. Keep the feet together, jumping with both feet at the same time. This style of skipping is more difficult to learn. Do not attempt double under until you become proficient with the running in place variation. Eventually, you can begin performing one or two double under at the conclusion of a running in place sequence. For example, spin the rope 10 times while running in place, and then finish with 1 or 2 double under. Stop and repeat this sequence several times. The next step is to perform a double under without losing control of the rope. Rather than stopping after the double under, you will continue by transitioning back to running in place with the rope (without stopping). In time, you will develop the ability to perform several consecutive double under.

To add to the coordination requirements of rope skipping, you can begin working with criss-cross patterns. You can perform a criss-cross while performing double under or with the traditional running-in-place style of rope work. To perform a criss-cross, you will cross the arms at the elbows on the downward swing of the rope. Jump through the loop of the rope that is formed in front of your body. Uncross the arms on the next downward swing. Continue to criss-cross the rope in this alternating fashion.

The criss-cross offers one way to interrupt the monotony of continuous rope skipping. You can integrate a criss-cross to spice up the rope session. You will eventually develop the skill to quickly integrate criss-crosses with high-speed rope turning.

These jump rope styles are just three of countless variations. I encourage you to develop new jumping styles (ex: one-leg double under). Continue to challenge yourself with new rope skipping patterns. Do not limit yourself to the same style of rope work (ex: running in place). Mix it up to promote improvements in coordination and agility.

One way to incorporate variety is by traveling frontward, backward and side-to-side. For example, run in place with the rope while traveling around the perimeter of a square. Move forward, sideways (right), backward and then sideways (left), ending back at the starting point. By incorporating frontward, backward and lateral movement, you will improve footwork and agility while simultaneously improving endurance.

AUSTIN ON FIRE

A look at Fire & Ink III: Cotillion black LGBT writers festival

Words/ Lisa Joyner

The energy of all who attended the Fire & Ink III: Cotillion was electric! The Hilton Hotel in Austin, Texas played host on October 8-11, 2009 to an eclectic group of incredibly gifted and cerebral gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writers of African descent. Spirits of excitement, camaraderie and hunger (to learn, to fellowship with like minds, to share knowledge and experiences) pulsed through the space and, I believe, touched most everyone present.

Attendees came from every corner of the United States and Canada (and even one person from South Africa) to partake and were rewarded with an inclusive watering hole (I do not use this term lightly as water is the substance of which our bodies are made and cannot live without), where they rubbed elbows with, wrote alongside, and attended workshops and panels with or presented by their peers. Many of them have been published several times over; others were known performers of their work, while some were just beginning their journey of releasing their words.

To get our juices flowing, each morning Marvin K. White moderated "Morning Literary Stretches." Throughout the day workshops varied, from "Screenwriting" to "Hiphop & Haiku" to "Making Peace with Making Money" to "Humor and Writing" to "Book Production I & II" to "Memoir Writing" to "Basic Fiction Writing" to "Black LGBTQ Translation," totaling twenty in all; there were just as many panels as well. Presenters at Cotillion included Steven G. Fullwood, Dorothy Randall Gray, Thomas Glave, Michelle Sewell, James Earl Hardy, R. Erica Doyle, Lisa C. Moore, Christopher Adams, and at least sixty others. There was a workshop or panel that covered just about every niche in the writing industry. Those missing were science fiction (a gaping hole left by Octavia Butler) and romance.

Writer Reginald Harris and film critic Ernest Hardy

One of the most enriching workshops I attended was "Alone Together: Creating a One-Person Show," presented by solo performance artist Lenelle Moïse. It was introspective and provided real-life examples of past shows that have captured and held audiences' attention. Another was comedian Karen William's workshop, "Humor and Writing," which surprisingly was full of both laughter and tears; it emphasized that often the emotions from the most outrageous or saddest incident come from shared experience.

On Friday afternoon the keynote speaker, Nikky Finney, took the shape of an oracle and hushed a room of over two hundred with her oratory gift. "Fire and Ink, ink and fire," she said, "there is nothing like being yourself, especially before the eyes of someone who recognizes you. Recognizes the you in them and them in you. There is nothing like being yourself and being beheld..." From there she created a quilt of words, each one bound by stories and the phrase "repetition is holy." "Don't say a thing over and over just because you can say it, because you have time and nothing else to say," she said. "Say it over, say it again, because the saying of it over and over is essential like the laying down of the steel tracks underneath your life." The collage of words she presented left everyone full and in awe of such a talent.

After being serenaded by Nikky Finney a couple hundred people traveled Friday evening to The Blanton Museum of Art to enjoy "DASH: Metaphor and Connection," curated by visual artist Torkwase Dyson. Dyson moderated conversations between fiber artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji and writer Tisa Bryant, multimedia artist Carl Pope and writer Ronaldo V. Wilson, and filmmaker M. Asli Dukan and writer Nalo Hopkinson. Another Cotillion offsite event was held Saturday at the AustinVentures Studio Theater at the Ballet Austin. There was a full house for the triple threat of performances: a staged reading of *delta dandi* written by Sharon Bridgforth; E. Patrick Johnson's one-man show *Pouring Tea*, and *An Evening with Jomama Jones* by Daniel Alexander Jones. Each performance was unique, but I must admit

Festival attendess R. Erica Doyle, T'ai Freedom Ford, Shelagh Patterson

my favorite that night was *Pouring Tea*. The way E. Patrick Johnson transformed from one character to another was flawless and entertaining.

After leaving Cotillion I returned to Washington, D.C. with renewed commitment to create the best work possible. I need to push my gift to the same level of passion that seeped from all the writers, publishers, bloggers, editors and performers at Cotillion and warmed our souls that wet, chilly weekend in Austin.

The nonprofit Fire & Ink board, which has been working tirelessly on a grassroots level, is devoted to increasing the understanding, visibility and awareness of the works of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writers of African descent and heritage. The next writers festival will take place in 2012, so those who missed this year's event should begin making plans now; I am certain it will be worth your wait. You can find information about Cotillion and how to make donations to Fire & Ink to help fund the next event at www.fireandink.org and http://2009.fireandink.org.

Archivist Kerrie Cotten Williams

Photos courtesy of Fire & Ink

WINTER EXPLOSION 2010: THE GRAND FINALE

Words/Jamil Fletcher

Entertainment legend Patti LaBelle captivates the crowd.

Say it isn't so! The year 2010 marks the end of an era as Winter Explosion (WE) hosts its Grand Finale in February. WE event coordinator Don Johnson explains: "I and many of the agents who produce the event work tirelessly on it year-round and it has taken its toll. Attendee support for the event is still good, but the sponsorship needed to maintain the high level of programming we have achieved has waned considerably." Johnson adds, "After sixteen years, it really just feels like it's time."

What started out in 1995 as a one-time bus trip from Philadelphia for a small group of black gay men and lesbians to go skiing has evolved into an annual gathering of more than 600 attendees from all parts of the country. WE is the longest running event of its kind for African-American members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

On the surface, WE looks like any other weekend bus excursion. A look at the itinerary and one can quickly see this is a unique event. Winter Explosion attendees participate in an array of activities that include skiing, themed parties, a fashion show, workshops, film screenings, horseback riding, a hot body contest, an outlet shopping spree, a spiritual service and, of course, those legendary musical concerts.

Patti LaBelle, Chaka Khan, Fantasia, Jennifer Holliday, Faith Evans, Rachelle Ferrell, Martha Wash, Vesta, Regina Belle… the list of singers who have graced the Winter Explosion stage reads like a Diva Hall of Fame. When asked about his favorite performances, Johnson shares his thoughts. "It seems that everyone who comes to Winter Explosion comes to deliver. I've seen legendary divas Chaka and Patti many, many times and I can't remember either of them giving a performance like they did at Winter Explosion," he says. "There's something about the intimacy of the theater, the energy from the crowd, that inspires them all to give more and more. Patti did two encores. Patti, Chaka and several others have said they got something special from the experience. I love hearing that.

"Although I am a true fan, Fantasia far exceeded my expectations and performed like someone was holding her family hostage backstage and she was singing for ransom," Johnson says with a laugh. "She even partied with us on a broken foot for hours afterward." Johnson adds, "One more artist who left an indelible mark on me was Tony Terry. He's one of only two male artists we've ever had—Kenny Bobien is the other—and his performance shattered any misconceptions that a male artist could not move a Winter Explosion crowd like a female artist. He was sexy, confident and sang his heart out. I went out and purchased his greatest hits as soon as I got back to town. We've truly been blessed with amazing artists over the years."

The Grand Finale in February should not disappoint. One of the hottest new divas on the scene, Ledisi, brings her sassy and soulful vibe to the Winter Explosion stage. Fresh off the release of her current recording *Turn Me Loose* with the hit song, "Goin' Thru Changes," Ledisi promises to give a performance for the ages.

Winter Explosion founder Don Johnson and singer Elisabeth Withers.

All photos courtesy of Winter Explosion, Inc.

Sunday mornings are particularly special for WE guests. While some sleep late to recuperate from the big Saturday night party, others rise early for the Sunday worship service. Johnson gives some background on how the spiritual service came about. "After WE began to gain momentum, I started feeling as if it had a purpose greater than a party," he says. "The timing was perfect because in 1999, my friend Reverend Kenneth King approached me about adding a spiritual element to the event. I immediately seized on it and together we carved out a service that neither of us was sure anyone would attend.

"With a resort full of black, gay folks, you know it wasn't hard to get an usher or two, and a few singers. We made an announcement earlier in the weekend and prayed people would attend," Johnson continues. "That first year about thirty people attended; it was a powerful experience that locked worship into the WE experience forever. Now, the service is so large, we struggle every year to find a place to hold it.

"Each year, I watch people's spirits lift, people's troubled souls set free and indescribable expressions of love and tenderness you don't often see among us," he says. "It's breathtaking and so very sacred. A special part of the service occurs when we remember those who have gone on before us." Johnson adds, "After all these years, Rev. King still leads the service and we have an amazing choir. Just about every denomination is represented."

Johnson has some favorite moments from Winter Explosions past. "My fondest memory is from 2003 when we got snowed in. We were in Pennsylvania during one of the worst snowstorms in history. Once the storm hit, no one could move for days. The entire group of 600+ ended up staying an extra day until the roads cleared. Even our artist, Vesta, stayed and made the most of it.

"The reason this is my fondest memory is because what could have been a real crisis actually turned into a very happy ending," Johnson says. "The WE family really came together to make sure that everyone was taken care of, making the necessary arrangements. No one complained or caused trouble. It was truly a beautiful thing to see and experience. I even got to dance all night the [extra] last night—something I never do."

"Another event that jumps to mind is when a guest proposed to her partner right in one of our workshops. The event was captured on film and later put on YouTube. One year from that date, WE had its first-ever wedding ceremony. It was gorgeous and brought a special joy to the whole weekend," Johnson says.

Winter Explosion has been an important institution for all who attend each year. So what will happen now that the event is ending? Johnson offers some hope. "The Winter Explosion brand took too long to build to just let sit idle, so I think we will do something different with it. Stay tuned for details!"

Let's get this party started! Check-in time at Winter Explosion.

Fantasia brings the heat.

Cameron da D.J. moves the crowd.

WE staff, at your service.

Past Musical Artists

2009	Fantasia, Elisabeth Withers
2008	Patti LaBelle, Rochelle Fleming, Kenny Bobien
2007	Chaka Khan, CeCe Peniston
2006	Faith Evans, Lil Mo
2005	Rachelle Ferrell, Jennifer Holliday
2004	Alyson Williams, Regina Belle, Vesta, Star Login, Tony Terry
2003	Vesta
2002	Ann Nesby
2001	Regina Belle
2000	Jennifer Holliday
1999	Martha Wash
1998	Alyson Williams

December 12, 2009
Remimakuo Media Club Annual Holiday Fundraiser
The Remimakuo Media Club is asking each guest to bring a donation for our annual winter accessories drive. Please bring a gift card or a winter accessory (hats, gloves, scarves, etc.) for an adolescent or young adult. Proceeds will be contributed to Taskforce for AIDS Prevention and Youth Pride, organizations serving GLBT youths. Robert Wayner/Black Walnut Gallery, 220 N. Aberdeen St., Chicago, IL 60607, 8 p.m.

December 19, 2009
Marcel Emerson *You Had Me at Hello* Book Signing
Join Marcel Emerson for the release of his second novel, *You Had Me at Hello*. The author will be on hand to autograph his new book and will sign your copy of his first book *My Eyes Are Green*. Refreshments and entertainment will be provided. 4914 Arkansas Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20011, 6 p.m.

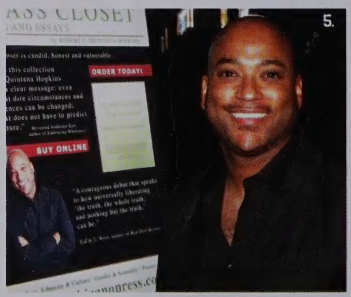
January 20, 2010
2010 Black Gay Research Summit
The Black Gay Research Group (BGRG) announced that the 2010 BGRG Summit will be held on January 20, 2010 in Atlanta at the Renaissance Concourse Hotel. The theme for the upcoming summit is "Reclaiming Our Place: Emerging Research and Dialogues on the Lives of Black Gay Men." The summit will highlight the scholarly and creative/artistic contributions of those who study the lives of black gay men from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. www.bgrg-international.org

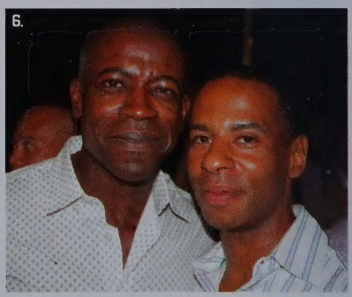
February 7, 2010
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is a national HIV testing and treatment community mobilization initiative targeted at blacks in the United States and the diaspora. The initiative has four specific focal points: education, testing, involvement and treatment. www.THETASKFORCE.org

ON THE SCENE

Photos courtesy of Us Helping Us

Us Helping Us' annual awards reception held on November 12, 2009, honoring those working to address the impact of HIV/AIDS in the District of Columbia. Go to uhupil.org for more on the organization. *1. (l-r) Chris Bates, Us Helping Us executive director Ron Simmons and guest. 2. (l-r) Event chair Cornelius Baker, Barbara Chinn and Donovan Anderson. 3. Singer Marcel Jacob of Marcel and The Truth.*





Photos courtesy of Some Brothas

Some Brothas quarterly events in San Francisco raising donations for charitable causes. *4. San Francisco Rock Dogs' Francis Broome (middle), Simon Griffin (right), Mike Survillion (front) and guest. 5. Author of* Glass Closet, *Robert Quintana Hopkins. 6. Some Brothas' attendees.*

PRIVATE STOCK ENTERTAINMENT
PRESENTS

Winter Explosion 2010

THE GRAND FINALE

PRESIDENT'S DAY WEEKEND
FEBRUARY 12-15

Yes, the rumors are true...
After 15 incredibly amazing,
successful years,
the end of an era has arrived!

Be a part of our historic finale celebration
What is Winter Explosion (WE) ????

WE: "The Experience"...

is the largest, longest-running black, gay winter getaway in existence!!!

INCLUDES:

3-NIGHTS/4-DAYS LODGING IN 4-STAR RESORT

OPEN BARS AND MEALS

MOTORCOACH TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM FIVE EASTCOAST CITIES

HOT THEME PARTIES NIGHTLY WITH TOP DJ'S

& MUCH, MUCH MORE!

LESS THAN 50 ROOMS LEFT!

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK YOUR SPACE...
VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.WINTEREXPLOSION.COM

OR

DON EL JOHNSON @ 202-489-1032

EMAIL: DON@WINTEREXPLOSION.COM

Featuring live concert performance by 2-Time Grammy Nominated

LEDISI

FROM LIVING LEGENDS TO "SHOOTING STARS".
WINTER EXPLOSION PRESENTS THE BEST...
LEDISI IS EASILY THE BIGGEST VOICE OF THE 21ST CENTURY!

By starting HIV treatment, I went from being in denial to discovering acceptance.

HIV TREATMENT IS POWER

If you're HIV positive, the decision to begin taking medication can be difficult. But it can be the first step toward reclaiming your life and living longer. Talking to your doctor and getting the right information on HIV treatment can help take you from being in denial to feeling in control.

Take the next step and go to
hivtreatmentispower.com or call **(877) Y-TREAT-HIV**

©2009 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT0561B 03/09

SPEAK
culture & community
FREE
WINTER 2009
AUTHORS
M.W. MOORE
& MARCEL
EMERSON
& ARTIST
RICARDO
FRANCIS
FIRST
ANNIVERSARY
ISSUE!
THE YOUNG
& INSPIRED
CELEBRATING THE NEXT
GENERATION OF BLACK
LGBT MOVERS & SHAKERS
ALSO: FILMMAKER
FAITH TRIMEL
PLAYWRIGHT
LAURINDA D. BROWN
& BRAVE SOUL COLLECTIVE'S
MONTE J. WOLFE
& METRO TEENAIDS'
ISAIAH WEBSTER

does your mama know?

An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories

Edited By Lisa C. Moore

By turns funny, passionate, angry and joyous, does your mama know? *reflects the complexity of emotions that accompany a black lesbian's coming out. These short stories, poems, interviews and essays—fiction and nonfiction—make up a powerful collection of original and new writing.*

"These voices [in *does your mama know?*] *are varied as are the tales they tell. Haitian, Jamerican, Afro-Canadian, biracial, Southern U.S., London by way of Barbados. Ages 14 to 90. ...It is extremely rare to see a book of any kind that reflects the diversity of black people in North America."*
—R. Erica Doyle,
Women in the Life *magazine*

"Few such voices have been raised to sing the history of African-American lesbians. Editor Lisa C. Moore noticed that and has set about to correct the omission, and she has done a masterful job of it."
—Dale Edwyna Smith,
Lesbian Review of Books

EXPANDED 2ND EDITION
WITH 17 NEW STORIES, NOW AVAILABLE!

does your mama know?
An Anthology of Black Lesbian
Coming Out Stories
Edited by Lisa C. Moore
Cover art © 1997 by Kamela Eaton
$19.95 paperback
RedBone Press
ISBN- 10 0-9786251-6-1
ISBN-13 978 0-9786251-6-0

REDBONE PRESS
Visit www.redbonepress.com or Contact: RedBone Press
P.O. Box 15571 / Washington, DC 20003 p: 202-667-0392 / f: 301-559-5239

Cover photo: Don Harris. Models: I. Rashod & Stephenie Fugett. Styling: Yarde Noir.

contents

WINTER 2009

FEATURES

THE YOUNG & INSPIRED 6
Uplifting features of today's black LGBT youth.

A SISTER WITH HEART & SOUL 9
Out and proud, Samantha Master fights for equality.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS 10
Detroit's Ruth Ellis Center's Bobbie Foote goes from homeless to helping hand.

AUSTIN ON FIRE 27
Fire & Ink III: Cotillion; the red-hot black LGBT writers festival.

WINTER EXPLOSION 2010: THE GRAND FINALE 28
The end of an era: The longest running black LGBT winter getaway hangs up its ski boots and goes out with a bang.

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR 5
by Michael-Christopher

COLUMNS 13
"As I See It" by Rob Smith &
"From the West" by Michelle Seweli

FILM 14
Taking a look at the new movie *Family* by Faith Trimel.

THEATER 15
Laurinda D. Brown brings new stage play *Bois Don't Cry*.

BOOKS 20
The newest installments from Marcel Emerson and M.W. Moore

ARTS: PORTRAIT MASTER 21
Sumptuous oil paintings of artist Ricardo Francis

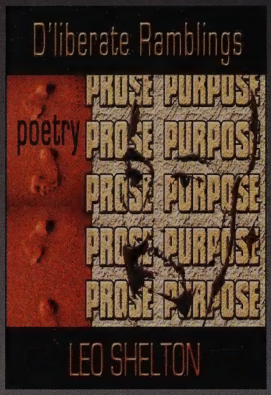
COMMUNITY 24
Editorials from HIV activist Monte J. Wolfe and Metro TeenAIDS' Isaiah Webster III

FITNESS 26
Get jumpin' with trainer Reico Walker.

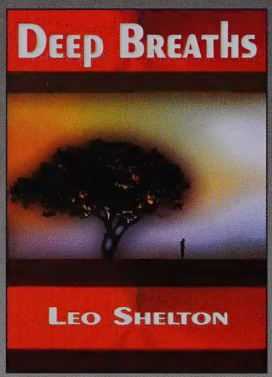
EVENTS FOR US 30
Get involved!

©2009 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

Available NOW!
New releases from Tugson Press and the 2008 IPPY Award winning author and poet, Leo Shelton.



D'liberate Ramblings
Poetry by Leo Shelton
Tugson Press
ISBN: 0-9791786-3-0
U.S. $12.00



Deep Breaths
Poetry by Leo Shelton
Tugson Press
ISBN: 0-9791786-4-9
U.S. $12.00

TUGSON
PRESS

www.tugsonpress.com

Tugson Press
P.O. Box 429
Temple Hills, MD 20757

contributors

Kenneth Anderson, a Detroit native, graduated from Jackson State University in vocal music education. Anderson is the founder of the Mosaic Singers, the musical wing of Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit; he has since become vice president and artistic director of the organization, growing Mosaic into one of the premier youth arts programs in the United States. He has led young choral groups to perform in 30 states in the U.S. and tours of Singapore, London, Denmark and Senegal. A recipient of the Spirit of Detroit Award and a community service award from Alpha Kappa Alpha, Anderson is a writer, photographer, community activist and human rights advocate.

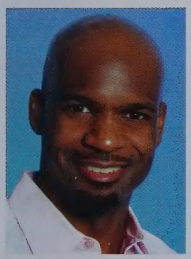
Patricia R. Corbett is a professional writer, public speaker and educator. She manages her blog, Out Black Voices, and is the owner/operator of JUSTASISTA, LLC, where she utilizes her writing, speaking and networking skills to create paradigm shifts in business, education and the community.

Lisa Joyner is a freelance writer/editor, activist and a producer on WPFW's LGBT radio show, *Inside Out*, in Washington, D.C. Her recent work includes poetry in the anthologies *Growing Up Girl: A Manifesta* and *Just Like a Girl*. She lives in Washington, D.C.

Clarence* J. Fluker is a freelance writer and blogger based in Washington, D.C. His work has appeared in a variety of print and online publications including *ARISE* magazine, where he served as Next Generation editor. His essay, "A Nation Divided," appears in the acclaimed anthology *Spirited* from RedBone Press. Fluker earned his undergraduate degree from Morgan State University and his graduate degree from American University.

Washington, D.C. native **Yardé Noir** began Genesys Productions before graduating from Duke Ellington School of the Arts in 1997. Noir went on to Bennett Career Institute majoring in hair and make-up, lending his talents as an experienced cosmetologist. Noir has worked as a make-up artist for Smashbox Cosmetics and Pretty by PR, and sits on the artistic team for Joya Cosmetics. Noir is the 2008 Elite Beauty Make-Up Competition Winner. Noir also attended the Art Institute of Washington majoring in graphic design and is currently pursuing a master educator's license.

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com



MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR

JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/MARKETING/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:
RIVENDELL MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

From the Editor

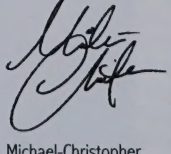
The older I get the more I say, "I wish I were 21 again," but I must be careful what I wish for. Being young, black and LGBT ain't no crystal stair, and the more we press forward for rights and visibility, the more opposition comes our way.

Depending on where you live, being young, black and LGBT could be downright dangerous. Our children have been taunted, chased and beaten for decades, and in recent years here in the United States, there have been more murders of black gay youth than I care to mention. Although none have captured national attention as Matthew Shepard, we are here to tell you that the lives of Sakia Gunn, Rashawn Brazell, Jason Mattison and all the other black LGBT youth, living or not, *matter*. And no child should be moved to end their life because they've been labeled a "fag" or "dyke."

In the past year that *SWERV* has been in existence, we have seen positive strides in our community: the coming out of Wanda Sykes, a nationally known comedian; filmmaker Lee Daniels, director of *Precious*, which is surely on the road to the Oscars; and Anthony Woods, the first openly gay African American to run for Congress. Events like these are what our young people need to see and embrace, letting them know they are not the "vampires" some seem to believe we are.

Despite what society might say, biological attraction is not a choice, disease or perversion, especially if it is acted upon with pride and dignity and love. However, the mantras "let freedom ring" and "the pursuit of happiness" somehow excluded looking for love. And although some define marriage as union between a man and woman there is another word in the dictionary with which some need to become familiar: Redefine.

Every life has the potential for greatness. Just like anyone else, black LGBT youth have potential to lead, inspire and create. The youth we've featured in our first anniversary issue of *SWERV* have done just that. One has even met the President and First Lady. If that isn't inspiring, then I don't know what is.



Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

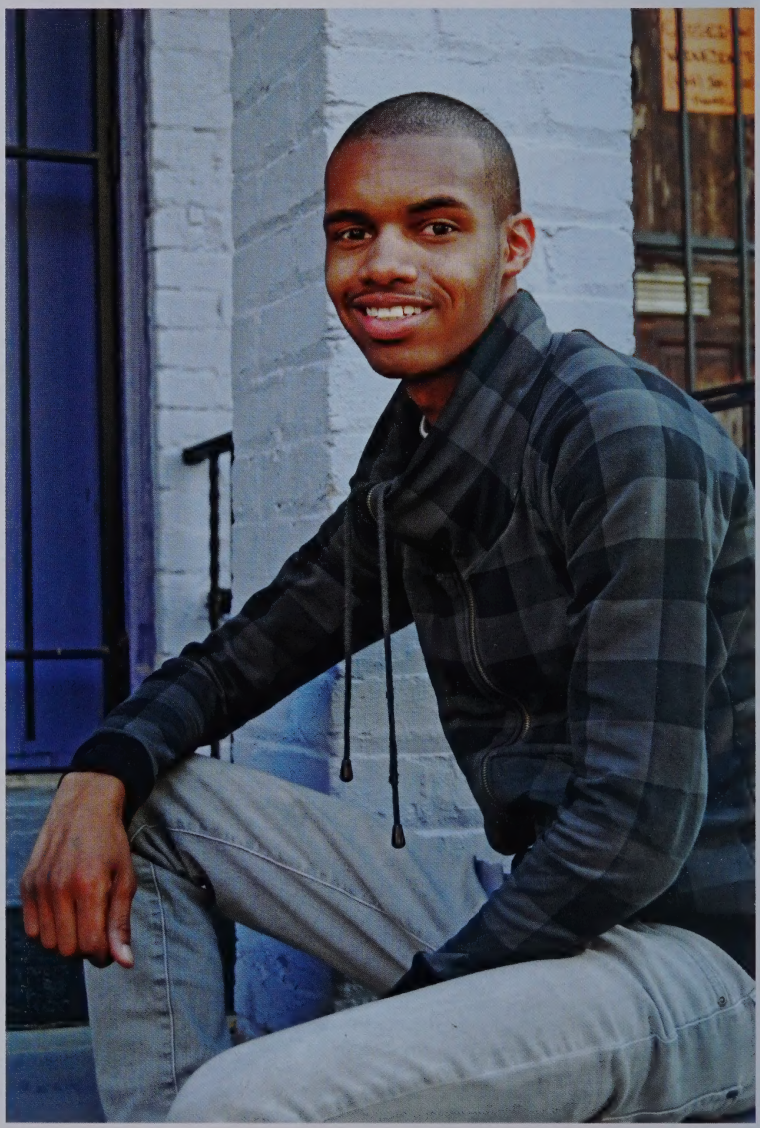
Growing up has never been easy, and today's black LGBT youth aren't buying into the "too young" mentality. The following stories feature some amazing young people, all under 30, who have been moving and shaking at an early age. They're all about change, equality and community. They are...

THE YOUNG & INSPIRED

Compiled by Jamil Fletcher

ANTHONY CORTEZ RILEY

Words/Photo Michael-Christopher



It has been said that youth is wasted on the young; that's not the case for Anthony Cortez Riley, who has made the most of his 21 years. Riley is on the road to being an expert in LGBTQ youth advocacy—and has already met President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House, as an invited guest.

Riley lives just outside of Washington, D.C. in Waldorf, a suburban Maryland town. Although just thirty miles south of the District, Riley used to feel as if he was the only same-gender-loving person around. "I didn't know a whole lot of gay people," he says. "I went to Dupont Circle [in Washington, D.C.] because that's where I heard they hung out." While there, Riley stumbled upon a copy of *Metro Weekly*, a local gay magazine, and chanced across something that would greatly enhance his life. "I saw an ad for a youth group that hosted gay events that was a safe space," he says. That group was SMYAL—the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League—a service organization dedicated to promoting productive lives for LGBTQ youth while providing counseling, health and wellness education, and safe social activities.

After a thorough googling, Riley decided to attend the organization's events, and soon became more involved and informed. "I didn't know about LGBT issues," he confesses. "Like, there's no employee protection in Virginia" where Riley works as a government defense contractor. Riley was shocked when he realized that he was not protected from losing his job because of his sexual orientation. "I didn't know how much I allowed myself to normalize many of the stigmas associated with the LGBTQ community," he says. "The lack of visibility in my own community

made me less aware of issues that other [LGBTQ persons] faced."

This realization led Riley to become a youth advocacy intern; he learned how to raise awareness about LGBTQ youth needs, through educating the community, lobbying government officials and designing campaigns to create safer spaces for youth. Now, Riley is one of the youth leadership specialists who help facilitate the program at SMYAL.

The concepts of advocacy, activism and volunteerism are not new to this young man. As a small child, Riley remembers seeing a firehouse being built in his neighborhood and vowing to his parents, "I'm going to work there someday." Riley made good on his childhood promise and became a volunteer firefighter at age 17, and has encouraged friends to follow suit. In high school Riley also participated in the Best Buddies program, which creates one-to-one friendships for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

An example of Riley's continued activism occurred recently while he was shopping for a pair of "skinny jeans." Riley, a small-framed man, found himself at Forever 21, a store geared to young women. After making his selection, Riley asked the salesperson where he could try on the pants. The perplexed salesperson had to seek advice from her manager, as there was no separate room for him to try on clothing. While waiting for his fate, Riley Tweeted the situation to his friends, feeling he was bound for discrimination. His friends, including an employee of the now-defunct *Washington Blade*, had his back. Thankfully, the manager granted Riley access to the main fitting room, averting a civil rights standoff. Nonetheless Riley, with his backup troops, was ready.

Riley's hope is that other young people will begin to follow in his footsteps. "I think a lot of youth have gotten away from volunteering. They ask me, 'You're doing this and that...for free? Who does that?'" Apparently, someone who's going places. Riley was chosen to represent SMYAL at the White House's first LGBTQ reception in June 2009, where he met the President and First Lady. Who knows? If Riley sets his sights on it, perhaps 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. will be his next place of employment.

Photo: MC

ANGEL BROWN

Angel Brown, a native of Washington, D.C., has been active in the nonprofit social justice and social change arena for the past thirteen years. At 29, she is currently the director of Community Outreach & Partnerships for Metro TeenAIDS, a nonprofit community health organization dedicated to supporting young people in the fight to end HIV/AIDS. Over the years Brown has served as a trainer, organizer, educator, artistic director, performer and advocate in the fight against HIV/AIDS and social stigma. Her work began at the age of 15 as an HIV-prevention peer educator; she has been going full-steam ahead ever since. She is actively involved in the youth, people of color, and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities.

[Continued next page]

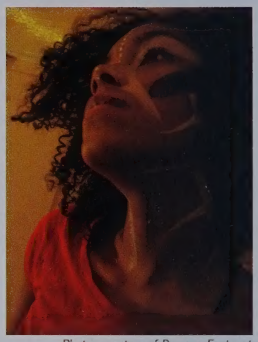
ANGEL BROWN

[Continued from previous page]

Brown is an alumnus of both Americorps—National AIDS Fund and Americorps—VISTA, serving in 1999 and then again in 2001. She is also among a cadre of a select few, as she is a graduate of The Black AIDS Institute's African-American HIV University. She has served on the board of directors for Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive (HIPS), a nonprofit in Washington, D.C. whose mission it is to assist female, male and transgender individuals engaging in sex work in leading healthy lives.

She has been featured in many notable publications, such as D.C.'s local LGBT newspaper *Washington Blade* and *The Advocate* magazine, as a result of her tireless efforts to advocate for the LGBT community. She is, without a doubt, a consistent advocate and educator for disenfranchised and marginalized communities. If asked she'll tell you that she intends to stay active as an advocate to address the numerous issues that affect her communities.

DESEREE FONTENOT



Photos courtesy of Deseree Fontenot

Deseree Fontenot is dedicated to a broader picture of social justice. She has had the honor of working on the logistical mechanics of nonprofit work as an assistant at the Williams Institute, a national think tank at UCLA's School of Law. The Williams Institute is focused on advancing sexual orientation law and public policy through rigorous, independent research and scholarship. She is also a board member of Gender Justice LA, a nonprofit organization focused on the rights of transgender and gender-variant identified people in Los Angeles. Fontenot is also a part of an arts group known as Women's Creative Collective for Change (WCC), an organization dedicated to bearing witness to under-told and untold stories; WCC believes in the importance of diversity, both within the organization and in the communities with which they collaborate. WCC seeks to create a safe and bonding space during their workshops, where participants may share their ideas and celebrate the art in their community.

Fontenot graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in English and minor in cinematic arts in May 2008. While at USC, she was the executive director of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Assembly, a division of student government that focused on advocating for the rights of queer students on campus through academic, political and cultural programming. Fontenot is motivated by her desire to see art and activism enliven and empower communities. She's most inspired by her grandmother's vitality; Fontenot credits her grandmother's quiet strength through years of struggle as the lead factor in keeping her family going.

After completing work at the Williams Institute and traveling, Fontenot plans to pursue a master of fine arts degree in writing. "Ideally, I would like to continue to work with organizations striving for social change and greater consciousness throughout my life," she says. Fontenot also admires the work of many artists, particularly spoken word poet and political activist Staceyann Chin. Fontenot says, "Her voice has always inspired me to raise mine higher."

SAMANTHA MASTER: A SISTER WITH HEART AND SOUL

Words/Clarence* J. Fluker

Photo courtesy of Samantha Master

Walking across the campus of Morgan State University in Baltimore, Md., one of the nation's 108 historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs), Samantha Master became outraged when she saw a fellow student wearing a T-shirt that read, "Silly faggot, d*cks are for chicks." Rather than shaking her head and walking away, she did what came naturally for her: She walked up to him and told him he should be ashamed of himself and if he wasn't, she was ashamed for him. Master, a 21-year-old junior at Morgan State, double majoring in business administration and political science, is also an out lesbian and active member of Rainbow Soul, the GLBT student group on Morgan's campus.

Sexual orientation and gender identity have for many years been taboo topics in the black community, as well as the microcosms of community that exist on the campuses of many predominantly black colleges and universities. As the veil continues to lift on sexuality and expression among African-Americans, awareness of GLBT people of color and their issues is rising, attitudes are changing and a movement is gaining momentum for equity and safe spaces within people of color communities. Rainbow Soul was founded in 2001 to give visibility and voice to out GLBT students and their allies at Morgan. As a result of evolving attitudes on campus, membership in Rainbow Soul has now reached 40 students.

Master admits she was first attracted to the group because she was interested in connecting with like-minded GLBT people of color. Master recalls that in high school she would skip her sixth period class so that she could go to gay/straight student alliance (GSA) meetings at a nearby high school because hers didn't have one. In college her involvement in Rainbow Soul has offered her an opportunity to connect with peers on her own campus. "It has made me a stronger, louder, prouder and more courageous individual," she says. "If nothing else, the members of Rainbow Soul have made me proud to be a black lesbian. Seeing them every week empowers me to do whatever I can to fight for justice and equality. It has also given me the strength to fully come out."

For the past two years, Master has served as the community service and outreach coordinator for the organization. "Previously, we've been viewed as the 'gay group on campus' and in essence, that's what we were. I'm not sure if there was a connection between us and other organizations or other faculty and staff outside of our advisor," she says. "Now students view us as a community partner and staff members view us as a 'safe space/political action group.'"

Master recognizes the power of the collective whole and knows that working together to build coalitions also tears down walls of ignorance. She points to the work of Rainbow Soul's collaboration with the Morgan chapters of the Young Women's Christian Association and the National Council of Negro Women. "A few members of the campus NAACP came out to assist us in a letter-writing campaign we did to members of Congress to support a fully inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)," she adds.

Master notes that the group doesn't just discuss issues that affect their shared communities; they do something about them. In addition to addressing campus concerns, Rainbow Soul has participated in phone banking for marriage equality, participated in walks to raise money for breast cancer research and volunteered with children in local hospitals. Master is active with a number of Rainbow Soul's current projects, including an intimate partner violence workshop, safe sex forum, transgender equality panel and an initiative to get a queer studies program.

This year, Master helped put together a workshop at D.C. Black Pride about being GLBT at an HBCU; she had support from Bowie State University's GSA, Eyes Wide Shut. A similar workshop, including Master, Morehouse alumnus and former Safe Space president Michael Brewer, and PrideTV's Anaré Holmes, was held at Atlanta Pride. Master notes there are other HBCUs with gay/straight alliances including North Carolina A&T's Acceptance without Exception, Winston-Salem State's Gay Straight Student Alliance, Spelman's Afrekete and Howard University's CASCADE.

Master is working on creating a national network of HBCU GLBT students and alumni. "My experiences at Morgan State have made me value the power of education," she says, "while my experiences with Rainbow Soul have made me value the power of being persistent, not backing down to get things done." When asked what she wants her legacy to be at Morgan State she replied, "I want students to remember that the administration of Morgan State University owes them more than a good education. Students have a right to a safe, healthy environment that nurtures and affirms them, and they have an obligation to protect that right."

Ruth Ellis Center Residential Counselor, Bobbie Foote

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Words/Photos/Kenneth Anderson

The Ruth Ellis Center in Detroit is a refuge for at-risk, Metro Detroit lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth ages 12 to 24 who are victims of abuse and/or neglect, or for those just seeking a safe space to be who they are without question or fear. Among their services are a drop-in center, street outreach program, transitional living programs and emergency housing shelter. And one of their success stories is a young woman named Bobbie Foote.

Bobbie Foote, now 25, was led to the Ruth Ellis Center at the age of 18. Foote's parents were drug addicts; she was raised by her grandmother for most of her young years. But at age 16 Foote came out as a lesbian, and her grandmother asked her to leave the house. Foote moved in with her still drug-addicted mother until the situation became unbearable. She subsequently lived with a young woman with whom she was involved, but when the relationship soured, she found herself homeless at age 18.

According to Jack Van Hecke, director of development and public relations for the Center, Ruth Ellis Center and Ruth Ellis House reaches about 2,000 young people per year; 97% are African American LGBT youth. Most come to the Center because they have been kicked out of their homes—frequently after coming out—or are in otherwise unlivable situations.

With nowhere to turn, Foote moved into Ruth's House, the transitional living wing of the Ruth Ellis Center. Ruth's House offers both semi-independent living (youth ages 12-17) and transitional living (youth ages 16-21). Foote says she learned life and interpersonal skills while living in Ruth's House, and credits her experience there for changing her life. "They offered me the chance to get my first real job," says Foote." I learned independence and responsibility."

The transitional program at Ruth's House offers housing, basic life skills

and counseling, interpersonal skill building, educational advancement, job preparation and attainment, and mental and physical health care. Foote's first job was at the International House of Pancakes. She remembers that Ruth's House helped her to save 8% of each of her checks to ensure that she would be able to make a smooth transition once she left the house.

The Center has a keen focus on educational gap support for the participants. The Center uses the McKinney-Vento Education Act, legislation specifically targeted for homeless youth, as a platform to provide vocational support. The Center partners with local school districts to encourage re-enrollment and a renewed commitment by educators and students to maintain good academic standing for the young people who are involved. They are provided with backpacks and other educational supplies, and given access to tutoring programs and mentors.

Students are offered help with college applications, career identification and financial aid. When, after becoming independent, Foote needed help with applying for financial aid for college, she contacted her support system at the Ruth Ellis Center for assistance. "No matter what, you are always family…and they help you," she says.

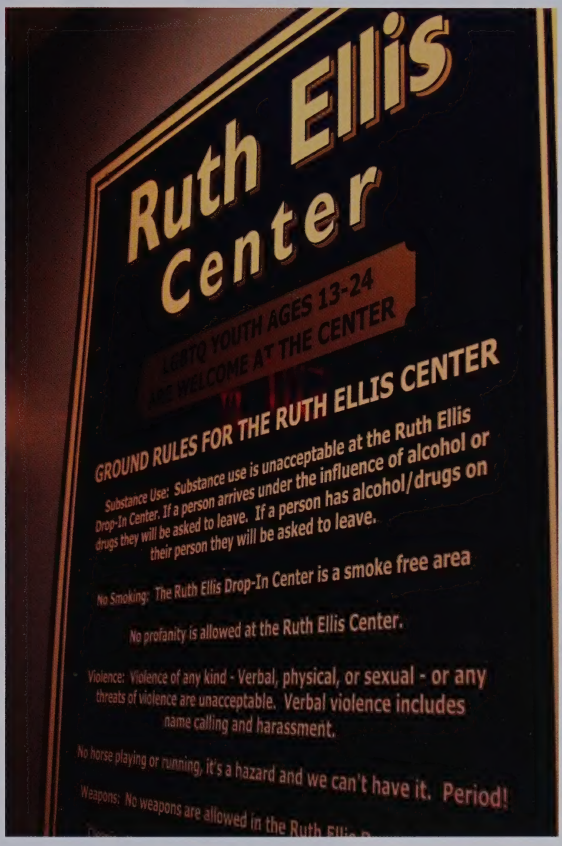
Not only did they help Foote get into college; they also offered her a job at the Ruth House. This opportunity was a dream come true for Foote; she was able to go to school while simultaneously giving back to the organization that had such a huge impact on her life. She became a residential counselor, a post she still holds.

Foote generally works the midnight shift at the house. She has a range of duties that include making sure the young people obey curfew, teaching them life skills, home economics and, perhaps most importantly, showing them how to be confident and comfortable in their own skin. She also teaches conflict resolution to each of the eight students she mentors, students who range in age from 15 to 20. All of her mentors are either in high school, life skills school, college or are learning a trade.

Foote says being an ex-resident helps her work better with the young people; "I can bring an understanding between the staff and the students," she says. Having once been a young person on the brink of homelessness and desperation herself, Foote can ultimately help her current charges understand themselves and the unique power they possess to control their own destiny.

Foote's favorite thing to do with the young people she mentors is to cook family-style dinners. " Unity is important to me," she explains. "I like to ask the kids how their day was and have us talk as a family, because that is what I miss most about my family…we were so close before they found out [about her sexuality]."

Foote's voice waxes poetic and nostalgic as she speaks of her past life. She is still estranged from much of her family, but maintains that it doesn't matter because she has her own independence and strength to depend on, something the Ruth House helped her build. Foote attends Wayne County Community College where she is studying social work. She plans to pursue higher education until she gets at least her master's degree; she dreams of one day opening her own transitional home for youth.


Ruth Ellis Center
LGBTQ YOUTH AGES 13-24
ARE WELCOME AT THE CENTER
GROUND RULES FOR THE RUTH ELLIS CENTER
Substance Use: Substance use is unacceptable at the Ruth Ellis Drop-In Center. If a person arrives under the influence of alcohol or drugs they will be asked to leave. If a person has alcohol/drugs on their person they will be asked to leave.
No Smoking: The Ruth Ellis Drop-In Center is a smoke free area
No profanity is allowed at the Ruth Ellis Center.
Violence: Violence of any kind - Verbal, physical, or sexual - or any threats of violence are unacceptable. Verbal violence includes name calling and harassment.
No horse playing or running, it's a hazard and we can't have it. Period!
Weapons: No weapons are allowed in the Ruth Ellis

When asked what message was most important to convey to youth and to people about the Ruth Ellis Center, Foote poignantly responded: "I want more youth to know that they have access to love and support and people like them. [Adults should] give time, loyalty and devotion to those who need it. No matter where you are, don't forget that the youth around you need you to stick it out."

Indeed—a call to action for us all.

You can find out more information and donate to the Ruth Ellis Center at www.ruthelliscenter.com.

Subscribe to

swerv magazine

For just $16

Never miss another issue of America's favorite black LGBT quarterly magazine!

Just log on to **www.SWERVMAG.com** and order online!

Get your subscription today!

And join us for **SWERV'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY EVENT**

Sunday, December 20, 2009 from 6pm to 9pm

at EFN Lounge in Washington, DC

(formerly BeBar)

- *Live Entertainment*
- *Specialty Cocktails*
- *Holiday Treats*

1318 9th St. NW
Washington, DC
20001

Pick up back issues while supplies last!

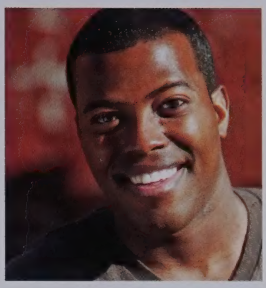
Find us on Facebook : *SWERV MAG*

Log on to www.*SWERVMAG.com* for event updates

THE WAY I SEE IT

Rob Smith

MARRIAGE EQUALITY: WHERE MY BLACK GAYS AT?



Up until about three months ago, I couldn't care less about gay marriage. I mean, our gay leadership decided that this was going to be the Issue of Our Time although we still haven't even ended HIV? This is the issue we won't shut up about, although we've got gay kids that are nearly three times more likely to be homeless than their straight counterparts? You've gotta be kidding me.

So back in the summer of 2009, Cleve Jones (rent *Milk* if you don't know) woke up one day and decided that there was going to be a national march on Washington, D.C. for equal marriage rights for gays. This was of course met with the usual sneering and derision from the gay blogosphere, and if there's anywhere the white gays and the black gays can find common ground, it's definitely within criticizing the sometimes weak and ineffectual leaders of the gay community who seem to be more concerned with giving awards to hetero celebrities who "support our cause" (whatever that means) than with actually inspiring people to bring about the change we need. Not that I was changing anything, mind you, but it sure was easy to gripe about it on the various gay message boards, or over cocktails with friends, or while I was doing everything but trying to do anything for the community. From the message boards to the clubs, to the LGBT center and the little gay industry parties, everyone seemed to be delighting in what an obvious disaster this so-called Equality March was going to be. We were pretty much resigned to the fact that nobody would show and it would be a total embarrassment that may actually set the movement back.

About a month beforehand, though, a funny thing started to happen. The conversation started to change, and people became less invested in bad-mouthing it and more worried about nobody showing. If nobody showed, the march would be a failure and prove that gays are more interested in their next drink and their next trick than anything else. They would win, the they who would already be in D.C. protesting gay marriage whether 500 or 500,000 people showed up, the they who perfected their gay-baiting on Fox News and got enough signatures to put something like Prop 8 on the ballot in California. Well, we couldn't let that happen.

I found myself on a bus to D.C. the day of the march, a week after being inspired by meeting Cleve Jones at the New York City LGBT Community Center. He answered my question about whether gay marriage was really my fight as an African-American gay male with three simple words. "You know," he said to me, with the patience and exasperation of someone who had been fighting for a long time, "it's about economics." For some reason, I finally got that.

OK, sure, the A-Gays with the condos and Fire Island shares would be able to marry their partners and have the financial security and benefits that marriage gives, but then again so could those two gay guys in Ohio who have been barely making ends meet, or the lesbians in Idaho that have been in a relationship longer than any of Britney Spears' marriages have lasted. Those are the people that I can relate to, and maybe it took someone to finally mention them, since all I'm used to seeing in this fight is the same affluent gays in Armani suits pontificating about equality.

All right. All on board. With that, my cloudy view of the gay marriage fight as that solely of privileged, rich, white gays was gone, and I was off to march, hoping that my fellow black gays had gotten the memo and would be heading out to D.C. in force to make our presence known. After all, this was the place where, as one friend so eloquently relayed to me after a weekend trip, he had "never seen so many black queens" in his life. Unfortunately dear readers, there weren't a lot of black gays. In fact, I would go so far as to say that our presence wasn't even a blip on the radar.

You know what? I get it. A lot of black gays feel alienated by the mainstream gay establishment, which tends to be very, very white and sometimes not so open to gays of color, particularly black gays. What I saw at the Equality March was a concentrated effort to break through those barriers that have been up for much too long, and I took it as a sign that things are starting to change. Any reader of this magazine is familiar with the brilliant Staceyann Chin; she performed an absolutely spine-tingling piece at the march, and Julian Bond of the NAACP was one of the keynote speakers.

What I am saying is that the times are changing, but are we as LGBT people of color changing with them? We definitely have a lot on our plates, but maybe it's time to take a harder look at full marriage equality as at least a side dish in the black gay issues buffet. After all, to borrow from the divine Sojourner Truth, ain't I a gay, too?

FROM THE WEST

Michelle Sewell

THE BLACK (FEMALE) BODY IN HOLLYWOOD

Last month I had the opportunity to attend a book release party for a new anthology, *The Black Body*, edited by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah. The collection of essays and poems explores the idea of what it means to have, or to love, a black body. Danquah assembled thirty black, white and biracial contributors to "take on the challenge of interpreting the black body's dramatic role in American culture." The book was robust and provocative and left me contemplating how the black body—specifically the black female body—takes up room in the entertainment machine we call Hollywood. Hollywood, the land of make-believe and glamour, is largely responsible for what we define as beautiful, desirable or sexy in this country.

Recently I was on Rodeo Drive and saw reality star Kim Kardashian (*Keeping Up with the Kardashians*) in the flesh. I'm aware that she is not black, but follow along anyway. She is the poster girl for "curvy" in these parts. What struck me first was how small she is. Small as in height; even with the six-inch heels it is clear she is barely 5'3". But she is also small in frame; my guess is she is probably a size 4. Her infamous butt is, well, a butt. There is no denying she has junk in her trunk, but the trunk belongs to a Mini Cooper as opposed to a Ford Taurus. But she, along with a handful of other actresses, has become the anemic measuring stick that is a fraudulent example of "real" bodies in L.A.

Every month a new starlet is dubbed the "It Girl"; magazines run shiny pictorials to support the proclamation. On the rare occasions when a black actress is sprinkled with "It Girl" fairy dust, there are a series of predictable adjectives that are trotted out to describe her. She is sassy, strong, serious, sexy, steely (yes, I am going for serial alliteration) and intense (that one is used for Angela Bassett). And when her body is described the word "curvy" is always on the top of the list. There is nothing wrong with being curvy, except it is the Hollywood euphemism of saying "bigger than a size 2." In the world outside of L.A., Gabriel Union, Nia Long and Halle Berry would have ham sandwiches forced on them on a regular basis—but those actresses do not inhabit our world. For them to compete for time on the silver screen they must take on all the markers (long weaves, extreme diets, tiny bodies) of their white counterparts. They simply become tea-stained Barbie dolls.

The discussion of how women's bodies are perceived in Hollywood is

FAITH IN FAMILY

Words/Lisa Joyner

Courtesy of Blue Butterfly Productio

Faith Trimel is proof that one can have a hand in their own destiny if they choose to do so. Acting is her dream—so she cast herself as a lead in two films that she wrote, directed and produced (*Black Aura on an Angel*, a romance thriller, and her most recent film, *Family*, a drama). *Family* showed at Reel Affirmations 19, Washington, D.C.'s LGBT Film Festival, on October 18, 2009 at the Shakespeare Theatre Company's Harman Center for the Arts, to an audience full of girls and boys excited to see an African-American feature-length film, which are few and far between in our community. In this film Trimel plays the role of "Felicia," who convinces her thirtysomething girlfriends to come out (of the closet) within 30 days. I spent the day with Trimel, and was surprised by her honesty. She mentioned being hurt by some reviews of *Family*, and expressed her belief that the film is the best reflection of her and her wit.

SWERV: Why acting? Why cast yourself in your own movies?
Faith Trimel: I always wanted to be an actress. People say different, but I know otherwise: There is kind of a prejudice [against] dark-skinned women. I don't have to apologize for wanting to be a leading woman—the love interest, or whatever. I wanted to be what I dreamed to be, which is the highest rung. I never really gave it the college try to go out and get those parts, but I kinda sensed it would be a waste to try, since they were dominated by beautiful biracial [women]. You know... I'm not taking anything away from them, but that has really been the norm.

You have the primary lead [in* Family*]?
FT: I'm technically in just about every scene. I'm the one who engages with every actress in the ensemble. Felicia has a one-on-one with all the leads, and sometimes two. What I am is the bone structure that holds up the Felicia character. She is the true issue of coming out; how you do it when you're in love with someone while you're denying [your relationship].

How does one direct and act at the same time?
FT: You do very detailed pre-production as I did, and you direct your movie by getting your shots set up and getting your actors where they need to be. Then you take a little time away, which I didn't always have the time to do, to get into your character. You then step on set and call action.

How did you get into filmmaking?
FT: I'd written a short script when I was in college, *Black Aura on an Angel*. Spirit told me to do so, and I just followed. On a whim I submitted to festivals, and it got picked up by NewFest [LGBT film festival] in New York City. Then one by one [more festivals] fell and invited me. I was bitten by the bug; the process of making it. It's one of the toughest, most pleasurable things—simultaneously. I was hooked, but I was afraid of the next project that was in me.

What year was* Black Aura *made?
FT: *Black Aura* was actually written in 1998 when I was in college. It was shot in 2003.

Why did you fear producing* Family*?
FT: Because it was very ambitious, and I barely had enough money to keep gas in my car. [I thought], "How am I gonna make this movie with all these people, and I don't really know how to make a movie?" *Black Aura* helped me do the first leap, but still the expense and time it took to make *Black Aura*... I said, "Oh, my God, if this smaller piece with just three major characters—and I'm one of them—is taking this much energy and effort, how on earth am I gonna make this movie?"

I wrote the first draft [of *Family*] in 2005. I think by 2007 I actually broke down and cried, thinking, "Is this ever gonna happen?" [But] something was in the air in 2008. I [put it out] to the universe, and decided to lead aggressively. That whole "leap, and the net will appear." I put the casting out. I got some donations through a web site I built for the Angel fund, seed money, which was sparse, but I can do a lot with a little. I've lived very effectively in high states of deprivation.

Why do you say that?
FT: That's a sad legacy of my childhood, which is that [it] was very modest and at times very destitute. We didn't have anything. I was a very precocious child. I was always in honors programs—one of those kids in the honors program with all this homework, and then I would go home and we wouldn't have electricity. I'd be doing it by candlelight. I'd go to school and pretend I was equal, up to par with everyone else, but I was underfed, undernurtured and stuff like that. No one ever was the wiser about my handicaps in terms of excelling. That's my nature. No matter how many handicaps, my goal is to excel, get beyond, and push through.

What was your coming out process?
FT: I wish I could say it was a trumpet. It had a boldness about it but I don't think I'll ever know [the full truth]. I told my mother in a letter. I wished I could have told her face to face, but I lived in Atlanta and she lived in Chicago. She returned an extraordinary letter. She said, "I love you, and I'm just happy that you are happy. Are you?" It was real positive all around. Of course, there's been thorny parts and other things that you have to negotiate with your family.

Are the actors in* Family *lesbians?
FT: No, most aren't. It's funny, when I tell people I'm not lesbian they think I'm saying I'm not gay, but I'm out and proud. Lesbian is a woman with a woman-centric life. I don't spend time around women, though I love them. I have romantic interests, and the rest of the time is usually spent with heterosexual men because that is [who] I resonate best with.

How did you create a movie about the girlfriend bond?
FT: *Family* for me is more than one-on-one moments. Usually I have these dynamic female relations, but I never actually had a clique of girls [in real life].

Then it's interesting that you made such a film.
FT: It's a wish.

Family is currently showing at film festivals around the country. To find out when it will hit your town, go to www.myspace.com/familythefilm or www.familythefilm.net

FROM BOIS TO MAN

Words/Patricia Corbett

Novelist Laurinda Brown, author of *Fire & Brimstone, Undercover, Walk Like a Man, Strapped* and The *Highest Price for Passion,* has moved from self-publishing her first books to landing a major publisher. Now riding the success of her Lambda Literary Award-winning *Walk Like a Man,* the Memphis native is nearing the end of a four-year countrywide tour of *Walk Like a Man — The Play,* even landing off-Broadway at the Crowne Theatre in New York City.

Walk Like a Man — The Play strings together vignettes that reflect different perspectives of lesbian life. "I chose vignettes that related to deep issues in the book *WLAM,*" says Brown. "Same-sex domestic violence and child sexual abuse are topics you never expect to see portrayed on stage by lesbians." Brown felt a sense of responsibility to "tell our stories as honestly and openly as I can," she says. "I tried to paint a picture that doesn't distort who we are. Whatever stereotypes are out there, I tried to go against them."

And while she doesn't advertise her own sexuality, she doesn't deny who she is and doesn't back down from exploring the many facets of women in lesbian relationships. She considers herself an observer of people. Her subjects are inspired by true stories, although she adds that she doesn't choose the characters or stories; they typically choose her. While her personal goal is "to obtain and retain peace" in her life, professionally she aspires "to have a positive impact" through writing about the communities that she represents.

Most of Brown's supporters may not be aware that she jumped headfirst into the production of *WLAM,* preparing it for stage in just six weeks with only a few investors. Eventually she would obtain sponsors, but much of the funding for the play came directly from her own pockets. Brown was also saddled with the high production cost of touring. "I made it my personal business to generate tickets sales so that the play would end its four-year run in the black," she says. Brown has continued to work as a full-time grant writer while *WLAM* has been in production.

Brown admits that producing *Walk Like a Man—The Play* was ambitious and demanding; she had never written a play before. However, not having any playwriting experience was just one of the many challenges. "Putting on a play is more than just pulling together an ensemble, getting a venue and doing a show," Brown says. "So many people don't seem to get that. The other challenge is dealing with the different personalities, and it is probably the latter one that made me step back for a minute."

Brown recalls how she didn't expect personality clashes, although she was warned that working with a cast of women could prove difficult. Theater is grueling, and her admitted quest for perfection brought out a side of her and some of her cast members that created some behind-the-scenes drama. "I looked in the mirror and did some serious reflecting. *WLAM* has truly been a learning experience," she says.

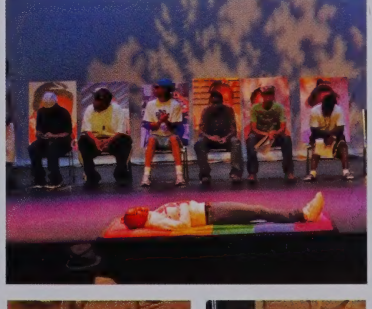
Citing the usual cast controversy and occasional personal interactions that made the experience somewhat difficult at times, Brown reveals that casting some older women has helped to subdue some of those problems and has brought a different energy to the show. In fact, there is only one surviving member of her original cast of *Walk Like a Man — The Play.* "For the most part, it was an extremely pleasurable experience because I watched a lot of women change," Brown says. "It was amazing to see so many lesbians come out to support my project." She was also excited to see relationships forged among cast members that would probably never happen outside of *WLAM.* Brown believes that the production provided an opportunity for people to be who they were even though she had cast members who were not out with their sexuality.

The financial and mental demands have weighed heavily on her, but at the end of four years Brown sees the positive aspects of producing the play. "I've found joy and comfort in my craft because it entertains and inspires others," she says. And the audience response has been phenomenal; Brown still receives requests to take the play to California and other parts of the country. She has also been asked to return to off-Broadway.

With all this activity and acclaim, one would think Brown might rest on her laurels, but she is in the process of producing a new play, *Bois Don't Cry. Bois Don't Cry* is comprised of a series of dramatic monologues told by "studs" or women who identify more with male gender expression. Brown describes the play as a glimpse into the lives of these women through nine monologues. While she admits that the impetus for the play is based on her exploration of her own gender identity, the play is based on personal testimonies from other women. One particular story is that of a transgender man and his transition. According to Brown, listening to the stories of various studs or bois has helped her to reach one of her most profound realizations: "Gender and sexuality are two different things." Although she plans to produce the play only once, Brown is considering a tour and is in negotiation with a management company.

Besides working on *Bois Don't Cry,* Brown is writing another novel, but she won't reveal what kind. "I don't like to identify with a particular genre because I've found that I write for everybody—gay or straight," she says. "I've written urban fiction, historical fiction and contemporary fiction. I don't like to limit myself." Clearly there are no limits to Brown's energy, either. Having added playwright, director and producer to her skill set, Brown continues to move forward.

Laurinda Brown may be contacted at walklikeaman2006@aol.com, www.myspace.com/wlam2007atlanta and on Facebook.



All photos courtesty of Laurinda D. Brown

USE OF TRUVADA:

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor and combines EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate [DF]) in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat adults with HIV-1 infection.

TRUVADA® does not cure HIV-1 infection or lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to others. **TRUVADA should not be used with** ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir DF 300 mg), VIREAD®, EMTRIVA®, Combivir® (lamivudine/zidovudine), Epivir® or Epivir-HBV® (lamivudine), Epzicom® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), or Trizivir® (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine) because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients. TRUVADA should not be used with HEPSERA® (adefovir dipivoxil).

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Contact your healthcare provider right away if you experience any of the following side effects or conditions while taking TRUVADA:

- **Nausea, vomiting, unusual muscle pain, and/or weakness. These may be signs of a buildup of acid in the blood (lactic acidosis), which is a serious medical condition**
- **Light colored stools, dark colored urine, and/or if your skin or the whites of your eyes turn yellow. These may be signs of serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity), with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly), and fat in the liver (steatosis)**
- **If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B virus (HBV) and stop taking TRUVADA, your liver disease may suddenly get worse. Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months.**
- If you have had kidney problems or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys
- Lab tests show changes in the bones of patients treated with VIREAD, a medicine in TRUVADA. If you have had bone problems in the past, talk to your healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA. Also, bone pain and softening of the bone (which may contribute to fractures) may occur as a consequence of kidney problems.

Changes in body fat have been seen in some people taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines.

If you notice any symptoms of infection soon after you start HIV treatment, talk to your doctor right away.

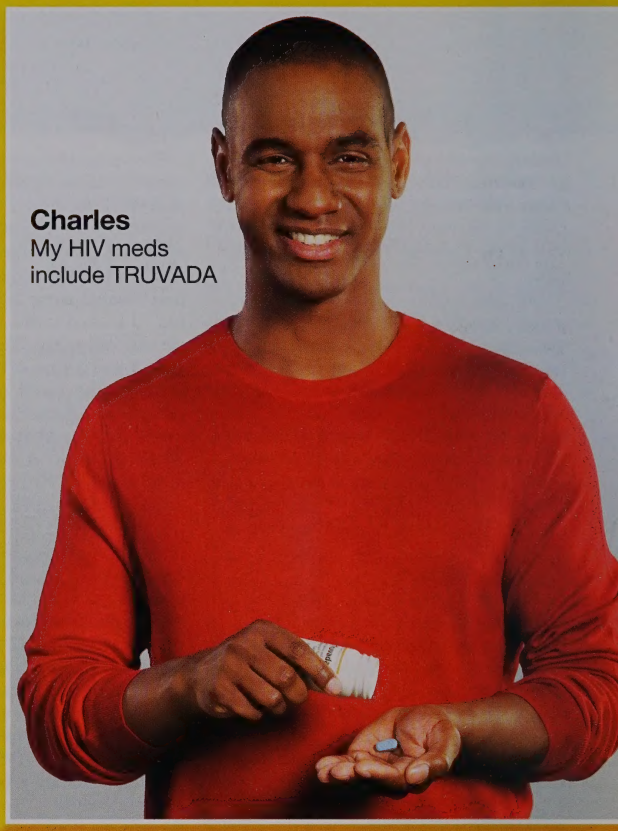
The most common side effects of the medicines in TRUVADA when taken with other anti-HIV-1 medicines are diarrhea, dizziness, nausea, headache, fatigue, abnormal dreams, sleeping problems, rash, depression, and vomiting. Additional side effects are kidney problems (including decline or failure of kidney function), inflammation of the pancreas, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, shortness of breath, pain, fatty liver, stomach pain, weakness, indigestion, and intestinal gas. High volume of urine and thirst, muscle pain and muscle weakness due to kidney problems have been reported. Skin discoloration (spots and freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

Discuss all medicines you take with your healthcare provider and be aware: Your healthcare provider may need to follow you more closely or adjust your therapy if you are taking Videx® or Videx® EC (didanosine), Reyataz® (atazanavir sulfate), or Kaletra® (lopinavir/ritonavir) with TRUVADA.

Please see Patient Information on next page, including **"What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"**.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA.
Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

I feel positive



In combination with other antiretroviral agents for the treatment of HIV-1 infection in adults

References: 1. Based on data from PHAST retail monthly data; September 2005-October 2008; Wolters Kluwer Health.

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, and VIREAD are trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc.
ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC.
All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

GILEAD

© 2009 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT553 02/09

about my future.
TRUVADA helps make it possible.

#1 prescribed **HIV** med by doctors[1]

Individual results may vary.

With *once a day* TRUVADA for my HIV, I can plan for long-term success.

- Proven over the long term to reduce viral load to undetectable (<400 copies/mL) and increase CD4 cell count in 3 years of a clinical study
- Established long-term safety and tolerability

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or prevent passing HIV-1 to others.

Ask your doctor about TRUVADA and go to www.TRUVADA.com.

Truvada®

200 mg emtricitabine · tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg

Think long term.* Starting now.

*Through 3 years of a clinical study.

Patient Information

TRUVADA® (tru-VAH-dah) tablets

Generic name: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate
(em tri SIT uh bean and te NOE' fo veer
dye soe PROX il FYOU mar ate)

Read the Patient Information that comes with TRUVADA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking to your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment. You should stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA. **Do not change or stop your medicine without first talking with your healthcare provider.** Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about TRUVADA.

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?

- **Some people who have taken medicine like TRUVADA (nucleoside analogs) have developed a serious condition called lactic acidosis** (build up of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of lactic acidosis.**
  - You feel very weak or tired.
  - You have unusual (not normal) muscle pain.
  - You have trouble breathing.
  - You have stomach pain with nausea and vomiting.
  - You feel cold, especially in your arms and legs.
  - You feel dizzy or lightheaded.
  - You have a fast or irregular heartbeat.
- **Some people who have taken medicines like TRUVADA have developed serious liver problems called hepatotoxicity,** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). **Call your healthcare provider right away if you get the following signs or symptoms of liver problems.**
  - Your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice).
  - Your urine turns dark.
  - Your bowel movements (stools) turn light in color.
  - You don't feel like eating food for several days or longer.
  - You feel sick to your stomach (nausea).
  - You have lower stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking nucleoside analog medicines, like TRUVADA, for a long time.
- **If you are also infected with the Hepatitis B Virus (HBV),** you need close medical follow-up for several months after stopping treatment with TRUVADA. Follow-up includes medical exams and blood tests to check for HBV that could be getting worse. **Patients with Hepatitis B Virus infection, who take TRUVADA and then stop it, may get "flare-ups" of their hepatitis. A "flare-up" is when the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before.**

What is TRUVADA?

TRUVADA is a type of medicine called an HIV-1 (human immunodeficiency virus) nucleoside analog reverse transcriptase inhibitor (NRTI). TRUVADA contains 2 medicines, EMTRIVA® (emtricitabine) and VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate, or tenofovir DF) combined in one pill. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with HIV-1 infection. TRUVADA is for adults age 18 and older. TRUVADA has not been studied in children under age 18 or adults over age 65.

HIV infection destroys $CD4^+$ T cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of T cells are destroyed, acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) develops.

TRUVADA helps block HIV-1 reverse transcriptase, a chemical in your body (enzyme) that is needed for HIV-1 to multiply. TRUVADA lowers the amount of HIV-1 in the blood (viral load). TRUVADA may also help to increase the number of T cells ($CD4^+$ cells). Lowering the amount of HIV-1 in the blood lowers the chance of death or infections that happen when your immune system is weak (opportunistic infections).

TRUVADA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of TRUVADA are not known at this time. People taking TRUVADA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium complex* (MAC) infection. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking TRUVADA.**

TRUVADA does not lower your chance of passing HIV-1 to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take TRUVADA?

- Do not take TRUVADA if you are allergic to TRUVADA or any of its ingredients. The active ingredients of TRUVADA are emtricitabine and tenofovir DF. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA if you are already taking ATRIPLA® (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg), Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA, Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD because these medicines contain the same or similar active ingredients.
- Do not take TRUVADA to treat your HIV infection if you are also taking HEPSERA® (adefovir dipivoxil) to treat your HBV infection.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- **are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** We do not know if TRUVADA can harm your unborn child. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if TRUVADA is right for you. If you use TRUVADA while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about how you can be on the TRUVADA Antiviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **are breast-feeding.** You should not breast feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing the HIV virus to your baby. Also, it is not known if TRUVADA can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **have kidney problems or are undergoing kidney dialysis treatment.**
- **have bone problems.**
- **have liver problems including Hepatitis B Virus infection.**

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Especially tell your healthcare provider if you take:

- Videx, Videx EC (didanosine). Tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) may increase the amount of Videx in your blood. **You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Videx together.** Also, the dose of didanosine may need to be reduced.
- Reyataz (atazanavir sulfate) or Kaletra (lopinavir/ritonavir). These medicines may increase the amount of tenofovir DF (a component of TRUVADA) in your blood, which could result in more side effects. You may need to be followed more carefully if you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz or Kaletra together. TRUVADA may decrease the amount of Reyataz in your blood. If you are taking TRUVADA and Reyataz together, you should also be taking Norvir (ritonavir).

Keep a complete list of all the medicines that you take. Make a new list when medicines are added or stopped. Give copies of this list to all of your healthcare providers and pharmacist **every** time you visit your healthcare provider or fill a prescription.

How should I take TRUVADA?

- Take TRUVADA exactly as your healthcare provider prescribed it. Follow the directions from your healthcare provider, exactly as written on the label.
- The usual dose of TRUVADA is 1 tablet once a day. TRUVADA is always used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines. If you have kidney problems, you may need to take TRUVADA less often.
- TRUVADA may be taken with or without a meal. Food does not affect how TRUVADA works. Take TRUVADA at the same time each day.
- If you forget to take TRUVADA, take it as soon as you remember that day. **Do not** take more than 1 dose of TRUVADA in a day. **Do not** take 2 doses at the same time. Call your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you are not sure what to do. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of TRUVADA or your anti-HIV-1 medicines.**
- When your TRUVADA supply starts to run low, get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to TRUVADA and become harder to treat.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking TRUVADA without first talking with your healthcare provider. Stay under a healthcare provider's care when taking TRUVADA.
- If you take too much TRUVADA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.

What should I avoid while taking TRUVADA?

- **Do not breast-feed.** See "What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA?"
- **Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection** since TRUVADA does not stop you from passing the HIV infection to others.
  - **Do not share needles or other injection equipment.**
  - **Do not share personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes or razor blades.**
  - **Do not have any kind of sex without protection.** Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to reduce the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.
- ATRIPLA (efavirenz 600 mg/emtricitabine 200 mg/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate 300 mg), Combivir (lamivudine/zidovudine), EMTRIVA (emtricitabine), Epivir or Epivir-HBV (lamivudine), Epzicom (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine), Trizivir (abacavir sulfate/lamivudine/zidovudine), or VIREAD (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate).

  TRUVADA should not be used with these medicines.
- TRUVADA should not be used with HEPSERA (adefovir dipivoxil).

What are the possible side effects of TRUVADA?

TRUVADA may cause the following serious side effects (see "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?"):

- **Lactic acidosis** (buildup of an acid in the blood). Lactic acidosis can be a medical emergency and may need to be treated in the hospital. **Call your doctor right away if you get signs of lactic acidosis.** (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")
- **Serious liver problems (hepatotoxicity),** with liver enlargement (hepatomegaly) and fat in the liver (steatosis). Call your healthcare provider right away if you get any signs of liver problems. (See "What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA?")

- **"Flare-ups" of Hepatitis B Virus infection,** in which the disease suddenly returns in a worse way than before, can occur if you stop taking TRUVADA (emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate). Your healthcare provider will monitor your condition for several months after stopping TRUVADA if you have both HIV-1 and HBV infection. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of Hepatitis B Virus infection. If you have advanced liver disease and stop treatment with TRUVADA, the "flare-up" of hepatitis B may cause your liver function to decline.
- **Kidney problems.** If you have had kidney problems in the past or take other medicines that can cause kidney problems, your healthcare provider should do regular blood tests to check your kidneys.
- **Changes in bone mineral density (thinning bones).** Laboratory tests show changes in the bones of patients treated with VIREAD (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate), a component of TRUVADA. If you have had bone problems in the past, your healthcare provider may need to do tests to check your bone mineral density or may prescribe medicines to help your bone mineral density. Additionally, bone pain and softening of the bone (which may contribute to fractures) may occur as a consequence of kidney problems.

Other side effects with TRUVADA when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines include:

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking TRUVADA and other anti-HIV-1 medicines. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the main part of your body (trunk). Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effect of these conditions are not known at this time.
- In some patients with advanced HIV infection (AIDS), signs and symptoms of inflammation from previous infections may occur soon after anti-HIV treatment is started. It is believed that these symptoms are due to an improvement in the body's immune response, enabling the body to fight infections that may have been present with no obvious symptoms. If you notice any symptoms of infection, please inform your doctor immediately.

The most common side effects of EMTRIVA (emtricitabine) or VIREAD when used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines are: diarrhea, dizziness, nausea, headache, fatigue, abnormal dreams, sleeping problems, rash, depression, and vomiting. Additional side effects are lactic acidosis, kidney problems (including decline or failure of kidney function), inflammation of the pancreas, inflammation of the liver, allergic reaction, shortness of breath, pain, fatty liver, stomach pain, weakness, indigestion, intestinal gas, and high volume of urine and thirst caused by kidney problems. Muscle pain and muscle weakness, bone pain, and softening of the bone (which may contribute to fractures) as a consequence of kidney problems have been reported. Skin discoloration (small spots or freckles) may also happen with TRUVADA.

These are not all the side effects of TRUVADA (emtricitabine/tenofovir disoproxil fumarate). If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider right away. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

How do I store TRUVADA?

- **Keep TRUVADA and all other medicines out of reach of children.**
- Store TRUVADA at room temperature 77 °F (25 °C).
- Keep TRUVADA in its original container and keep the container tightly closed.
- Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. If you throw any medicines away make sure that children will not find them.

General information about TRUVADA:

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Do not use TRUVADA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give TRUVADA to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them.

This leaflet summarizes the most important information about TRUVADA. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider. You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for information about TRUVADA that is written for health professionals. For more information, you may also call 1-800-GILEAD-5 or access the TRUVADA website at www.TRUVADA.com.

Do not use TRUVADA if seal over bottle opening is broken or missing.

What are the ingredients of TRUVADA?

Active Ingredients: emtricitabine and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate

Inactive Ingredients: Croscarmellose sodium, lactose monohydrate, magnesium stearate, microcrystalline cellulose, and pregelatinized starch (gluten free). The tablets are coated with Opadry II Blue Y-30-10701 containing FD&C Blue #2 aluminum lake, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose 2910, lactose monohydrate, titanium dioxide, and triacetin.

Rx Only

November 2008

TRUVADA, EMTRIVA, HEPSERA and VIREAD are registered trademarks of Gilead Sciences, Inc. ATRIPLA is a trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb & Gilead Sciences, LLC. All other trademarks referenced herein are the property of their respective owners.

21-752-GS-022 041108

Marcel Says: Hello

Words/Photo/Michael-Christopher

If it weren't for Marcel Emerson's love of fiction, he'd be pulling teeth right now. Literally. The Seattle-born and raised author of *My Eyes Are Green* originally came to Washington, D.C. to attend Howard University's dental program, but things didn't work out as planned. Emerson ended up failing a class his first year because he was "having too much fun" hanging out at the many well-known D.C. clubs and lounges. During his second year, Emerson failed two more classes, which he credits to reading novels during lectures. Clearly, his heart was not in the mouth, and with three classes down the tubes, Howard University made the decision Emerson could not make for himself: It was time to go.

Emerson was also dealing with the demise of a two-and-a-half-year relationship. "I thought, 'this is it,'" he recalls, thinking he'd found his life partner and that their happily ever after was written in stone. Sadly, his much older, military lover went AWOL, leaving Emerson hurt and bitter. His swirling emotions found solace in the Erykah Badu song, "Green Eyes" from the *Mama's Gun* CD. The bluesy opening declares, "My eyes are green / 'cuz I eats a lot of vegetables / it don't have nothing to do / with your new friend." Emerson's connection to the song's back and forth of being over the pain and slipping back into hurt sparked something in him. He knew that would be the title of his debut novel.

My Eyes Are Green was a long time coming. Life, work and school got in the way, putting fiction writing on the back burner in lieu of writing twenty-page papers. After receiving his master's degree in business administration, Emerson gained the free time and discipline to finish his story. He didn't write directly about his own experience, but instead drew inspiration from some of the problems and issues that friends and co-workers were going through.

In *Eyes*, one of the main characters, Dontae, a Georgetown Law School freshman, begins a relationship with the charming Darrel, only to have love put on hold by the death of Darrel's father. Darrel vanishes, but comes back later with a pregnant wife, and an offer to continue his relationship with Dontae.

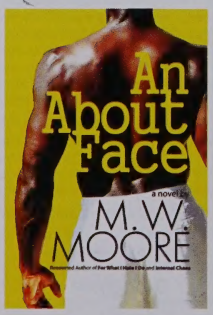
Emerson's second novel came about through another process. "I hadn't planned on writing another book," he admits. "Folks wanted more. This was me trying to be an author—to see if I had the magic to write another story." Seemingly spellbound, Emerson churned out *You Had Me at Hello* just five months after the Jerry McGuire-inspired title came to him.

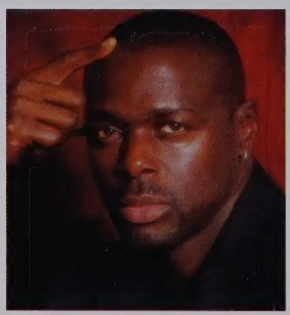
Being a two-time author doesn't get in the way of Emerson attending his book club. Even though he's been on the road promoting he makes sure he's in town every second Saturday to discuss their selection of the month. Book club member Lee Hayes (author of *Passion Marks*, *A Deeper Blue* and *Messiah*) has acted as mentor to Emerson, helping to enhance Emerson's writing and editing.

One thing that has changed for Emerson is having to come out of his comfort zone and promote himself. "I've been hustlin'," he says. "I've had to go up to strangers, telling them I have a book and what it's about. Many times it's cold sales. I feel like a telemarketer sometimes!"

Hopefully, like the title says, he'll greet them with his boyish smile and will have them at hello.

M.W. Moore's Turnaround





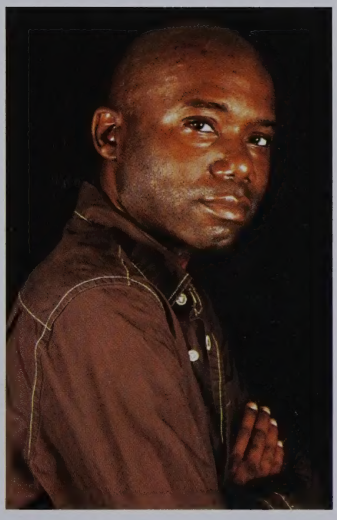
An About Face is the final installment of a trilogy that tracks a turbulent life from youth to adulthood. The previous releases, *For What I Hate I Do* and *Internal Chaos*, are part of the semi-fictional storyline of protagonist Miguel Morris, whose life closely mirrors that of the author, M.W. Moore. The three novels detail the conflicts, consequences of sexual addictions, drug binges and imprisonment suffered by Moore.

The final years of prison don't get any easier for Miguel, a former NCAA track athlete, as forces continue to derail his hopes for early freedom. He's still tested by guards, fellow inmates and the bruising sun as he slaves on the prison work farm. But in this volume, he's trying to avoid mistakes due to unresolved sexual addictions.

Once paroled, he quickly finds employment and hits pay dirt when an Internet design firm hires him as a technician despite his felony conviction for six bank robberies. He later attempts a relationship with Jasmine, leaving behind wounded ex-lover and confidante, Lazlo, that causes embers to fly. Notwithstanding financial success, he relearns the brutality of the free world when jealous colleagues Carlton and Eva hurl sexual innuendos and threaten him with blackmail, jeopardizing his attempt at true love.

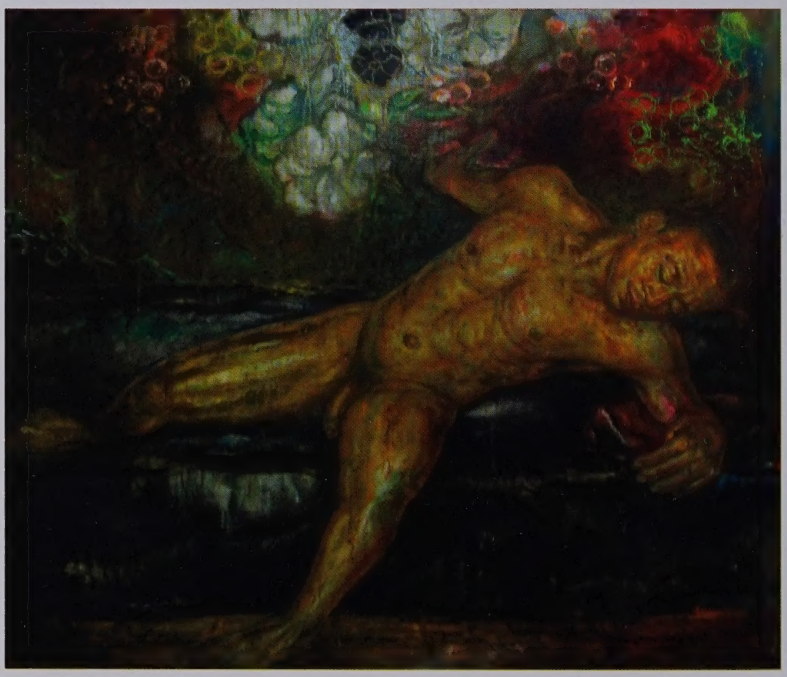
PORTRAIT MASTER

Words/Michael-Christopher
Photos/ Omar Mariluz



At age 14, budding artist Ricardo Francis was happy using his talent toward his goal of being a comic book artist. Luckily, his art teacher showed him another option; he took Francis under his wing as an apprentice painter. The practice paid off; at 33 Francis is well on his way to being a master.

["The Uncomplicated Womb"]



Francis was born and raised in Houston, Texas, which he describes as a very religious and conservative environment. "[But] my family didn't beat it into me," he says. "They allowed me free will to think." That free will led him to the Maryland Institute College of Art as a painting major, then to New York City where he would settle into his craft and life as a working artist.

His growing body of visual art is done primarily in oils, and usually depicts a male nude of color. Francis himself is of black and Panamanian heritage, which he says are "two groups who are usually misrepresented and hypersexualized in the media." He continues, "When you take off the clothes, race, class and culture come off as well. When you look, you see more of a true person, not a fetish."

Francis began painting with many sociopolitical issues in mind, but now he's more focused on the figure; "the person is the theme itself," he says. Francis photographs models and then renders his paintings from the reference. In the self-portrait, "The Uncomplicated Womb," [page 21] Francis "brings it" from both sides of the canvas. "I needed to have a photo shoot. I put myself in a window and when I saw the photograph, I just loved it," he says. "I decided to recreate it as a painting." He says the painting depicts a man pondering self-reflection and his own design.

"Echo" [bottom left] was a lesson for Francis. He admits that he almost threw the painting away, but instead took the challenge of concentration it presented. Although he had an idea of what the piece was going to be, things were panning out quite differently, leaving him feeling discouraged. "['Echo'] taught me how to stretch myself," he says. "It really kicked my ass to focus on painting from the gut instead of worrying about the planning."

["The Golden Room," above; "Echo," left]

To learn more about Ricardo Francis and his art, visit www.apanamae.com

Francis, also an accomplished performance artist, put together "¿Qué Hora Es?" in 2002, a multimedia project incorporating spoken word, movement, dance and art installation. He also created "The Anonymous Life" in '03, a one-act "internal monologue" in which a married man discovers his same-sex attraction. The piece examines how many men of color feel the need to recreate the life of a straight man in order to function in society, while also depicting the positive and negative aspects of a gay existence.

EMBRACING CHANGE:

A BRAVE SOUL SPEAKS

Words/Monte J. Wolfe

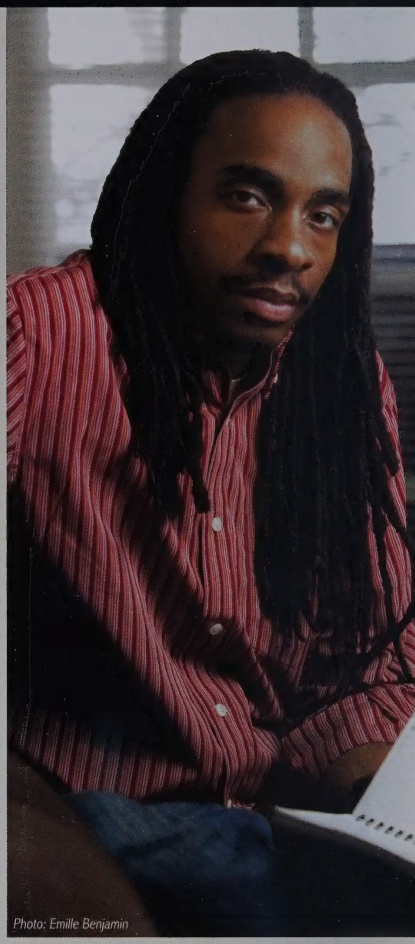


Photo: Emille Benjamin

My name is Monte Jermaine Wolfe. I am an artist. I am also a black gay man living with HIV. In 2006 I embarked on a journey that would change the course of my life. For many years prior I had experienced a number of challenging, memorable experiences, but this particular year would be a pivotal one. That February I became a parent...but not in the traditional sense. I was charged with creating something that would not only affect me, but many other individuals. With the assistance of two of my fellow black, gay, HIV-positive brethren, Erik Chambers and Tim'm T. West, I founded Brave Soul Collective (BSC), an education, outreach and support organization with a focus on HIV/AIDS outreach through the performing and literary arts.

When the idea originally came to me I was not only frightened, but certain that I couldn't do it alone. As the details developed, it became clear to me that nothing that was unfolding was solely about me; it was about something much larger. Even though my fears and insecurities tried to overshadow the inspiration as it came, I quickly got clear about what was happening. Everything that I had experienced up until then—including but not limited to bouts with depression, suicide attempts, low self-esteem, coming to grips with my sexuality and HIV status—all made sense in that holy instant. I'd survived a wealth of painful situations and circumstances and it was time to put all of those things to use in order to heal, and then share the process by which I was able to do so with the world through the vehicle of the arts.

Thus, in May of 2006 Brave Soul Collective was born.

In the beginning, creating BSC was about Tim'm, Erik and I being able to embrace, express and be proud of ourselves and all that came along with our lives as artists, as black gay men and as people living with HIV. The level of acceptance and overall response that we received from simply being honest and speaking our truths was liberating and refreshing, to say the least. The greatest gift has been that, as a result of each of us being open and honest about certain parts of our lives, others have been given the permission and courage to do the same.

Fast forward three years to the present and, inevitably, a lot has changed professionally and personally. Now at 35 I can admit that one of the most challenging things I've had to repeatedly deal with in life has been change. Shortly after BSC was created, three became two. Initially, I had a very difficult time with the departure of Erik Chambers as an active member of BSC, largely because we had been friends for nearly six years before embarking on the journey that came along with the creation of the organization. What I would come to understand was that his departure had nothing to do with me, nor was it something I could control or fix. It was simply something that happened and I had to move forward with what I had been called to do regardless.

Since then, Tim'm and I have continued to move forward with writing, performing and facilitating BSC performances, gatherings and workshops nationwide. Over the course of the last three years we've also managed to create a safe space for individuals (from all walks of life) to gather on a monthly basis to dialogue, share and communicate with one another about topics that include sexuality, racism, mental and emotional wellness, spirituality and many other relevant issues.

A lot has changed personally as well. When I began the process of creating BSC, I had been single for quite some time. I'm now in a relationship that is nearing the two-year mark. There have been rewards, challenges and even more opportunities to heal that have come along with being in a relationship. The majority of it I've been able to process, discuss and share through my work with BSC.

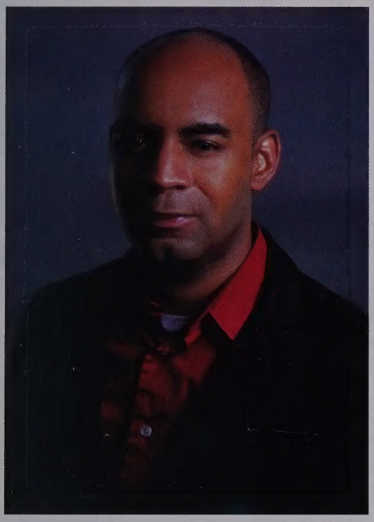
Over the past three years, I've learned how to operate from a much more practical head space, specifically by staying open to whatever happens. Serving as the artistic/managing director of a grassroots organization has presented a wealth of challenges for me. Making a living as a working artist is an art in and of itself. It's truly been a process of trial and error. Much of my time is spent moving literally from one thing to another. Early on, I tried to do everything. Sometimes I was successful, other times I fell short. Thankfully all of the events and performances we've produced have enabled me to understand that I can't do it all alone, nor do I have to.

What I sometimes still forget is that BSC is now a living, breathing thing with arms that reach much further than even I can see in many ways. I liken my experience to that of someone learning how to be a parent for the first time. Mistakes are a part of the process and as hard as it is to do, sometimes all that is required is to let go. What happens from there is nothing short of miraculous.

For more on Brave Soul Collective, please visit http://www.bravesoulcollective.org/bsc.

PASSING THE TORCH IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

Words/Isaiah Webster III - Photo/MC



As the 30th anniversary of the discovery of AIDS approaches, many advocates are experiencing some serious burnout—even those of us who have been fighting the epidemic for only the last ten years. I am, at this moment, approximately 32,000 feet in the air traveling to San Francisco for United States Conference on AIDS (USCA), an annual meeting of HIV/AIDS prevention, advocacy and treatment professionals. This marks my fifth overall trip to USCA and my third as a presenter.

My colleagues and I do get tired. The reasons for advocates' burnout are many: information fatigue, condom fatigue, activism fatigue, community organizing fatigue... It all adds up. But as our complacency and fatigue grows, so does the epidemic.

African-Americans, and especially black gay men, continue to see their infection rates increase. Though rates have had temporary periods of decline or leveling off, they always rebound upward. If we want to make serious advancements in the fight against HIV/AIDS in the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community, the approach has to be three-fold.

First, there needs to be more HIV-prevention interventions developed specifically for the African-American LGBT community. While adapting existing programs is always an option, providers should have a full buffet of programs to choose from, not just a few. Our community is talented enough and resourceful enough to develop dynamic prevention programs. Every population and sub-population in our community deserves HIV-prevention interventions that are created with them in mind, in order to address their challenges, hopes and fears.

Second, we must take a holistic approach to our prevention efforts. This means taking a serious look at the demons that are ever-present in our community. As black gay people, it is vital that we address our issues with internalized homophobia, racism, lack of adequate health care, the role of faith and family, and abuse. Growing up black in America is tough. Growing up black and poor in America is really tough. But growing up black, poor and gay in America presents a serious challenge. Of course it's possible to emerge from this dealt hand with a full house, but it requires self-reflection and, most of all, support.

Finally, we must pass along everything we know about this epidemic to the next generation. I'm a decent cook. I'm not nearly the cook that my grandmother was when she was alive, but what little I know about making a lemon meringue pie from scratch I learned from her. The next generation of black gay people, defined as those who are coming of age now, will be charged with ending this epidemic. It is their calling.

In the absence of mass deaths and widespread opportunistic infections as seen in the 1980s, it's difficult for today's generation to see and feel the impact of AIDS. As the disease becomes more manageable, it becomes more of the fabric of our lives, more "normal." The days before advanced medications and accessible AIDS service organizations were pure hell. It would be criminal of us not to do everything we can to convey what we've learned with those who are following in our footsteps. Textbooks and Google searches are no match for personal stories and interpersonal connections.

With each trip to USCA, I see old friends and make new ones. It's amazing how inspirational the work of others can be to your own. At this conference and in the days ahead, I will press my peers to find new solutions to an old problem, new solutions that include this three-fold approach. Our future depends on it.

Isaiah Webster III is the director of capacity building for Metro TeenAIDS.

FROM THE WEST

Continued from page 13

one that is age-old. But with the introduction of Gabourey "Gabby" Sidibe in the starring role of *Precious*, I think there is an opportunity to have a more honest dialogue and to see if Hollywood is ready to embrace a real big girl.

In 2006, Jennifer Hudson was the sassy, big It Girl. She had an extraordinary award show run that ended with a Best Supporting Actress Oscar. Every time she showed up on the red carpet, the words "curvy" and "voluptuous" weren't too far behind. In reality the big girls in the rest of the country couldn't help laughing. On her biggest day Jennifer Hudson was a size 16, but more likely usually a 14. What was the big deal? She didn't look any different than the girl that lived next door.

Well, this award season is being dominated by one Gabourey Sidibe and there is no doubt, tipping the scale at 300 pounds, that she is an authentic big girl. But what is interesting is how the discussion about Gabby's body has been framed in the context of her alter ego, Precious. It's as if they don't share the same body. In the litany of reviews the word "obese" is flung around liberally as they describe her character, Clareece Precious Jones, but in interviews with Gabby the writers consistently remark how "different" she is from the character she portrays in the blistering movie. The difference is her bubbly personality, her Valley Girl voice, the sense that she has somehow escaped the cruelty of adolescence. But most critics don't take the honest next step and say what is the same: her weight. Interview after interview, she is filling out every square inch of her sized-for-her designer dress. She is taking up every square inch of the chair that is provided for her during the press junket. But no one dares speak it. Is it because there is legitimate concern that Gabby truly is obese? That they see nothing attractive about her (which I think is absolutely not true)? Or that there is no language in the Hollywood lexicon to describe her? To say she is "curvy" or "voluptuous" (in Hollywood-speak) would be dishonest. So it is simply ignored.

And that is a shame. In many ways Gabby is breaking new ground for actresses larger than a size 22. She is the perfect example: American filmgoers are ready to pay their money to see a woman that has not been created by the Hollywood starlet machine and may not necessarily be relegated to the character parts reserved for the not-so-beautiful or skinny people. The blogosphere has been on fire regarding this very topic. Bloggers have not been shy about talking about Gabby's weight, but the discussions have taken disturbing turns. What starts out as a critique of Precious quickly devolves into screeds on Gabby's weight and how it somehow diminishes her credible performance. The argument is that because she started out "fat" she is not really acting. Really?

With that kind of illogical and unfair criticism I can't help but wonder what is next for her. Will she go the way of Hattie McDaniel or will Hollywood loosen its belt and make room for a remarkable new talent that couldn't find a size 24 dress on Rodeo Drive to save her life?

JUMP TO IT!

Words/Reico Walker of Walker Fitness

One of the best workouts for weight loss is a fighter's workout. A fighter's conditioning has to be pushed to the edge so that when in battle they can push through fatigue. One of my favorites is jumping rope. It's inexpensive with priceless results—and fun!

Jump rope training will enhance:

- Coordination
- Agility
- Speed
- Endurance

Ropes

You can purchase a quality jump rope for $6 or less. To top it off, you can easily pack a jump rope with you no matter where you travel.

I recommend a lightweight plastic speed rope. These ropes are more effective than heavier leather ropes and weighted ropes. The speed rope will allow you to maintain a much faster spinning pace.

Next determine its ideal length. Common rope lengths range from 8 to 10 feet. Most ropes that you find will be 9 feet. A 9-foot rope will be long enough for most athletes who are 6 feet tall or shorter. Athletes over 6 feet tall may require a 10-foot rope.

Typically, you may need to adjust your rope. I often snip 2 or 3 inches off a 9-foot rope to increase its speed (per my height). One way to determine the ideal length is to step one foot in the middle of the rope. The handles should reach up to approximately armpit height. Trim one inch at a time and test each length.

Jumping Surface

I recommend jumping rope on a shock-absorbent surface such as a wood floor, gym mat, outdoor track or tennis court. In addition, you should wear a quality pair or cross-training shoes when skipping rope.

It is important that you become proficient with the rope before using it as a conditioning tool. If you have never jumped rope before, you can expect some initial frustration. You must first view your rope sessions as skill workouts. You need to develop skill with the rope, and then add it to your conditioning arsenal.

Start with frequent, short jump rope sessions. For example, start with 20-second intervals on the rope. Just try to skip for 20 seconds without tripping on the rope. Keep the intervals brief, and stop before fatigue mounts. The body is much more capable of learning when it is fresh, not fatigued.

Perform these skill emphasis sessions regularly. Frequent practice is recommended. Eventually, you will move past 20 seconds, and begin working with 1-, 2- and 3-minute rounds. Many boxers will skip rope for several rounds during each training session. Rest for 30 to 60 seconds between each round.

For example:

- 6 sets of 3-minute rounds of jump rope
- Rest 60 seconds between rounds

Rope Skipping Styles

Running in place with the rope is one of the easiest rope skipping patterns to learn. You will remain stationary, lifting the knees high with each turn of the rope.

Double under is another popular skipping pattern. To perform a double under, you will make two turns of the rope for every one jump. Keep the feet together, jumping with both feet at the same time. This style of skipping is more difficult to learn. Do not attempt double under until you become proficient with the running in place variation. Eventually, you can begin performing one or two double under at the conclusion of a running in place sequence. For example, spin the rope 10 times while running in place, and then finish with 1 or 2 double under. Stop and repeat this sequence several times. The next step is to perform a double under without losing control of the rope. Rather than stopping after the double under, you will continue by transitioning back to running in place with the rope (without stopping). In time, you will develop the ability to perform several consecutive double under.

To add to the coordination requirements of rope skipping, you can begin working with criss-cross patterns. You can perform a criss-cross while performing double under or with the traditional running-in-place style of rope work. To perform a criss-cross, you will cross the arms at the elbows on the downward swing of the rope. Jump through the loop of the rope that is formed in front of your body. Uncross the arms on the next downward swing. Continue to criss-cross the rope in this alternating fashion.

The criss-cross offers one way to interrupt the monotony of continuous rope skipping. You can integrate a criss-cross to spice up the rope session. You will eventually develop the skill to quickly integrate criss-crosses with high-speed rope turning.

These jump rope styles are just three of countless variations. I encourage you to develop new jumping styles (ex: one-leg double under). Continue to challenge yourself with new rope skipping patterns. Do not limit yourself to the same style of rope work (ex: running in place). Mix it up to promote improvements in coordination and agility.

One way to incorporate variety is by traveling frontward, backward and side-to-side. For example, run in place with the rope while traveling around the perimeter of a square. Move forward, sideways (right), backward and then sideways (left), ending back at the starting point. By incorporating frontward, backward and lateral movement, you will improve footwork and agility while simultaneously improving endurance.

AUSTIN ON FIRE

A look at Fire & Ink III: Cotillion black LGBT writers festival

Words/ Lisa Joyner

The energy of all who attended the Fire & Ink III: Cotillion was electric! The Hilton Hotel in Austin, Texas played host on October 8-11, 2009 to an eclectic group of incredibly gifted and cerebral gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writers of African descent. Spirits of excitement, camaraderie and hunger (to learn, to fellowship with like minds, to share knowledge and experiences) pulsed through the space and, I believe, touched most everyone present.

Attendees came from every corner of the United States and Canada (and even one person from South Africa) to partake and were rewarded with an inclusive watering hole (I do not use this term lightly as water is the substance of which our bodies are made and cannot live without), where they rubbed elbows with, wrote alongside, and attended workshops and panels with or presented by their peers. Many of them have been published several times over; others were known performers of their work, while some were just beginning their journey of releasing their words.

To get our juices flowing, each morning Marvin K. White moderated "Morning Literary Stretches." Throughout the day workshops varied, from "Screenwriting" to "Hiphop & Haiku" to "Making Peace with Making Money" to "Humor and Writing" to "Book Production I & II" to "Memoir Writing" to "Basic Fiction Writing" to "Black LGBTQ Translation," totaling twenty in all; there were just as many panels as well. Presenters at Cotillion included Steven G. Fullwood, Dorothy Randall Gray, Thomas Glave, Michelle Sewell, James Earl Hardy, R. Erica Doyle, Lisa C. Moore, Christopher Adams, and at least sixty others. There was a workshop or panel that covered just about every niche in the writing industry. Those missing were science fiction (a gaping hole left by Octavia Butler) and romance.

Writer Reginald Harris and film critic Ernest Hardy

One of the most enriching workshops I attended was "Alone Together: Creating a One-Person Show," presented by solo performance artist Lenelle Moïse. It was introspective and provided real-life examples of past shows that have captured and held audiences' attention. Another was comedian Karen William's workshop, "Humor and Writing," which surprisingly was full of both laughter and tears; it emphasized that often the emotions from the most outrageous or saddest incident come from shared experience.

On Friday afternoon the keynote speaker, Nikky Finney, took the shape of an oracle and hushed a room of over two hundred with her oratory gift. "Fire and Ink, ink and fire," she said, "there is nothing like being yourself, especially before the eyes of someone who recognizes you. Recognizes the you in them and them in you. There is nothing like being yourself and being beheld..." From there she created a quilt of words, each one bound by stories and the phrase "repetition is holy." "Don't say a thing over and over just because you can say it, because you have time and nothing else to say," she said. "Say it over, say it again, because the saying of it over and over is essential like the laying down of the steel tracks underneath your life." The collage of words she presented left everyone full and in awe of such a talent.

After being serenaded by Nikky Finney a couple hundred people traveled Friday evening to The Blanton Museum of Art to enjoy "DASH: Metaphor and Connection," curated by visual artist Torkwase Dyson. Dyson moderated conversations between fiber artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji and writer Tisa Bryant, multimedia artist Carl Pope and writer Ronaldo V. Wilson, and filmmaker M. Asli Dukan and writer Nalo Hopkinson. Another Cotillion offsite event was held Saturday at the AustinVentures Studio Theater at the Ballet Austin. There was a full house for the triple threat of performances: a staged reading of *delta dandi* written by Sharon Bridgforth; E. Patrick Johnson's one-man show *Pouring Tea*, and *An Evening with Jomama Jones* by Daniel Alexander Jones. Each performance was unique, but I must admit

Festival attendess R. Erica Doyle, T'ai Freedom Ford, Shelagh Patterson

my favorite that night was *Pouring Tea*. The way E. Patrick Johnson transformed from one character to another was flawless and entertaining.

After leaving Cotillion I returned to Washington, D.C. with renewed commitment to create the best work possible. I need to push my gift to the same level of passion that seeped from all the writers, publishers, bloggers, editors and performers at Cotillion and warmed our souls that wet, chilly weekend in Austin.

The nonprofit Fire & Ink board, which has been working tirelessly on a grassroots level, is devoted to increasing the understanding, visibility and awareness of the works of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender writers of African descent and heritage. The next writers festival will take place in 2012, so those who missed this year's event should begin making plans now; I am certain it will be worth your wait. You can find information about Cotillion and how to make donations to Fire & Ink to help fund the next event at www.fireandink.org and http://2009.fireandink.org.

Archivist Kerrie Cotten Williams

Photos courtesy of Fire & Ink

WINTER EXPLOSION 2010: THE GRAND FINALE

Words/Jamil Fletcher

Entertainment legend Patti LaBelle captivates the crowd.

Say it isn't so! The year 2010 marks the end of an era as Winter Explosion (WE) hosts its Grand Finale in February. WE event coordinator Don Johnson explains: "I and many of the agents who produce the event work tirelessly on it year-round and it has taken its toll. Attendee support for the event is still good, but the sponsorship needed to maintain the high level of programming we have achieved has waned considerably." Johnson adds, "After sixteen years, it really just feels like it's time."

What started out in 1995 as a one-time bus trip from Philadelphia for a small group of black gay men and lesbians to go skiing has evolved into an annual gathering of more than 600 attendees from all parts of the country. WE is the longest running event of its kind for African-American members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

On the surface, WE looks like any other weekend bus excursion. A look at the itinerary and one can quickly see this is a unique event. Winter Explosion attendees participate in an array of activities that include skiing, themed parties, a fashion show, workshops, film screenings, horseback riding, a hot body contest, an outlet shopping spree, a spiritual service and, of course, those legendary musical concerts.

Patti LaBelle, Chaka Khan, Fantasia, Jennifer Holliday, Faith Evans, Rachelle Ferrell, Martha Wash, Vesta, Regina Belle… the list of singers who have graced the Winter Explosion stage reads like a Diva Hall of Fame. When asked about his favorite performances, Johnson shares his thoughts. "It seems that everyone who comes to Winter Explosion comes to deliver. I've seen legendary divas Chaka and Patti many, many times and I can't remember either of them giving a performance like they did at Winter Explosion," he says. "There's something about the intimacy of the theater, the energy from the crowd, that inspires them all to give more and more. Patti did two encores. Patti, Chaka and several others have said they got something special from the experience. I love hearing that.

"Although I am a true fan, Fantasia far exceeded my expectations and performed like someone was holding her family hostage backstage and she was singing for ransom," Johnson says with a laugh. "She even partied with us on a broken foot for hours afterward." Johnson adds, "One more artist who left an indelible mark on me was Tony Terry. He's one of only two male artists we've ever had—Kenny Bobien is the other—and his performance shattered any misconceptions that a male artist could not move a Winter Explosion crowd like a female artist. He was sexy, confident and sang his heart out. I went out and purchased his greatest hits as soon as I got back to town. We've truly been blessed with amazing artists over the years."

The Grand Finale in February should not disappoint. One of the hottest new divas on the scene, Ledisi, brings her sassy and soulful vibe to the Winter Explosion stage. Fresh off the release of her current recording *Turn Me Loose* with the hit song, "Goin' Thru Changes," Ledisi promises to give a performance for the ages.

Winter Explosion founder Don Johnson and singer Elisabeth Withers.

All photos courtesty of Winter Explosion, Inc.

Sunday mornings are particularly special for WE guests. While some sleep late to recuperate from the big Saturday night party, others rise early for the Sunday worship service. Johnson gives some background on how the spiritual service came about. "After WE began to gain momentum, I started feeling as if it had a purpose greater than a party," he says. "The timing was perfect because in 1999, my friend Reverend Kenneth King approached me about adding a spiritual element to the event. I immediately seized on it and together we carved out a service that neither of us was sure anyone would attend.

"With a resort full of black, gay folks, you know it wasn't hard to get an usher or two, and a few singers. We made an announcement earlier in the weekend and prayed people would attend," Johnson continues. "That first year about thirty people attended; it was a powerful experience that locked worship into the WE experience forever. Now, the service is so large, we struggle every year to find a place to hold it.

"Each year, I watch people's spirits lift, people's troubled souls set free and indescribable expressions of love and tenderness you don't often see among us," he says. "It's breathtaking and so very sacred. A special part of the service occurs when we remember those who have gone on before us." Johnson adds, "After all these years, Rev. King still leads the service and we have an amazing choir. Just about every denomination is represented."

Johnson has some favorite moments from Winter Explosions past. "My fondest memory is from 2003 when we got snowed in. We were in Pennsylvania during one of the worst snowstorms in history. Once the storm hit, no one could move for days. The entire group of 600+ ended up staying an extra day until the roads cleared. Even our artist, Vesta, stayed and made the most of it.

"The reason this is my fondest memory is because what could have been a real crisis actually turned into a very happy ending," Johnson says. "The WE family really came together to make sure that everyone was taken care of, making the necessary arrangements. No one complained or caused trouble. It was truly a beautiful thing to see and experience. I even got to dance all night the [extra] last night—something I never do."

"Another event that jumps to mind is when a guest proposed to her partner right in one of our workshops. The event was captured on film and later put on YouTube. One year from that date, WE had its first-ever wedding ceremony. It was gorgeous and brought a special joy to the whole weekend," Johnson says.

Winter Explosion has been an important institution for all who attend each year. So what will happen now that the event is ending? Johnson offers some hope. "The Winter Explosion brand took too long to build to just let sit idle, so I think we will do something different with it. Stay tuned for details!"

Let's get this party started! Check-in time at Winter Explosion.

Fantasia brings the heat.

Cameron da D.J. moves the crowd.

WE staff, at your service.

Past Musical Artists

2009	Fantasia, Elisabeth Withers
2008	Patti LaBelle, Rochelle Fleming, Kenny Bobien
2007	Chaka Khan, CeCe Peniston
2006	Faith Evans, Lil Mo
2005	Rachelle Ferrell, Jennifer Holliday
2004	Alyson Williams, Regina Belle, Vesta, Star Login, Tony Terry
2003	Vesta
2002	Ann Nesby
2001	Regina Belle
2000	Jennifer Holliday
1999	Martha Wash
1998	Alyson Williams

EVENTS FOR US

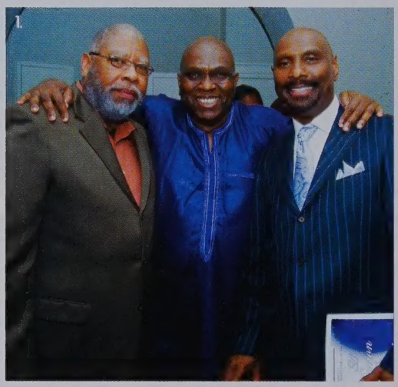
December 12, 2009
Remimakuo Media Club Annual Holiday Fundraiser
The Remimakuo Media Club is asking each guest to bring a donation for our annual winter accessories drive. Please bring a gift card or a winter accessory (hats, gloves, scarves, etc.) for an adolescent or young adult. Proceeds will be contributed to Taskforce for AIDS Prevention and Youth Pride, organizations serving GLBT youths. Robert Wayner/Black Walnut Gallery, 220 N. Aberdeen St., Chicago, IL 60607, 8 p.m.

December 19, 2009
Marcel Emerson *You Had Me at Hello* Book Signing
Join Marcel Emerson for the release of his second novel, *You Had Me at Hello.* The author will be on hand to autograph his new book and will sign your copy of his first book *My Eyes Are Green.* Refreshments and entertainment will be provided. 4914 Arkansas Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20011, 6 p.m.

January 20, 2010
2010 Black Gay Research Summit
The Black Gay Research Group (BGRG) announced that the 2010 BGRG Summit will be held on January 20, 2010 in Atlanta at the Renaissance Concourse Hotel. The theme for the upcoming summit is "Reclaiming Our Place: Emerging Research and Dialogues on the Lives of Black Gay Men." The summit will highlight the scholarly and creative/artistic contributions of those who study the lives of black gay men from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives. www.bgrg-international.org

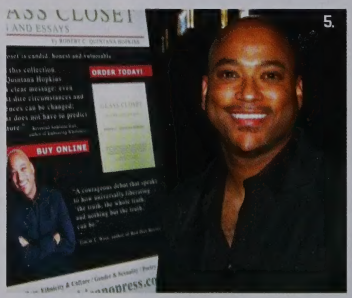
February 7, 2010
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day is a national HIV testing and treatment community mobilization initiative targeted at blacks in the United States and the diaspora. The initiative has four specific focal points: education, testing, involvement and treatment. www.THETASKFORCE.org

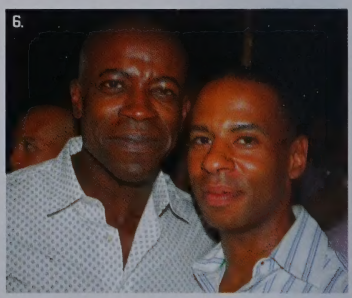
ON THE SCENE



Photos courtesy of Us Helping Us

Us Helping Us' annual awards reception held on November 12, 2009, honoring those working to address the impact of HIV/AIDS in the District of Columbia. Go to uhupil.org for more on the organization. *1. (l-r) Chris Bates, Us Helping Us executive director Ron Simmons and guest. 2. (l-r) Event chair Cornelius Baker, Barbara Chinn and Donovan Anderson. 3. Singer Marcel Jacob of Marcel and The Truth.*





Photos courtesy of Some Brothas

Some Brothas quarterly events in San Francisco raising donations for charitable causes. *4. San Francisco Rock Dogs' Francis Broome (middle), Simon Griffin (right), Mike Survillion (front) and guest. 5. Author of* Glass Closet, *Robert Quintana Hopkins. 6. Some Brothas' attendees.*

PRIVATE STOCK ENTERTAINMENT
PRESENTS

Winter Explosion 2010

THE GRAND FINALE

PRESIDENT'S DAY WEEKEND
FEBRUARY 12-15

Yes, the rumors are true...
After 15 incredibly amazing,
successful years,
the end of an era has arrived!

Be a part of our historic finale celebration
What is Winter Explosion (WE) ????

WE: "The Experience"...

is the largest, longest-running black, gay winter getaway in existence!!!

INCLUDES:

3-NIGHTS/4-DAYS LODGING IN 4-STAR RESORT

OPEN BARS AND MEALS

MOTORCOACH TRANSPORTATION TO AND FROM FIVE EASTCOAST CITIES

HOT THEME PARTIES NIGHTLY WITH TOP DJ'S

& MUCH, MUCH MORE!

LESS THAN 50 ROOMS LEFT!

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BOOK YOUR SPACE...
VISIT OUR WEBSITE:

WWW.WINTEREXPLOSION.COM

OR

DON EL JOHNSON @ 202-489-1032

EMAIL: DON@WINTEREXPLOSION.COM

Featuring live concert performance by 2-Time Grammy Nominated

LEDISI

FROM LIVING LEGENDS TO "SHOOTING STARS".
WINTER EXPLOSION PRESENTS THE BEST...
LEDISI IS EASILY THE BIGGEST VOICE OF THE 21ST CENTURY!

By starting HIV treatment, I went from being in denial to discovering acceptance.

HIV TREATMENT IS POWER

If you're HIV positive, the decision to begin taking medication can be difficult. But it can be the first step toward reclaiming your life and living longer. Talking to your doctor and getting the right information on HIV treatment can help take you from being in denial to feeling in control.

Take the next step and go to
hivtreatmentispower.com or call **(877) Y-TREAT-HIV**

©2009 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT056TB 03/09

swerv

culture & community
www.swervmag.com

FREE
SPRING 2010

RAPPERS
KAOZ & FOXXJAZELL

PLUS A LOOK INTO THE
BLACK AMERICA PAGEANT

LAUGHING IT UP WITH COMEDIAN
KAREN WILLIAMS

THE TRANSITION OF
TIQ MILAN

THE MIGHTY ISIS

TOP MODEL'S SENSATION SOARS TO HIGHER HEIGHTS

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH OUT GOSPEL RECORDING ARTIST
TON3X

Sometimes being in a relationship isn't always easy —

KNOW WHERE YOU STAND

1 Do we know our HIV status?

2 Is it just the two of us?

3 Do we use condoms?

To find out more about how to get free HIV tests and free condoms call **311** or go to **DCTakesOnHIV.com**

DC TAKES **ON HIV**

Government of the District of Columbia
Adrian M. Fenty, Mayor

DOH
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
Promote. Prevent. Protect.

SWERV

contents

SPRING 2010

FEATURES

WHAT'S THE "T" ON TRANSGENDER LIFE? 11
A look at the facts by Jamil Fletcher.

THE MIGHTY ISIS; ON HER WAY UP 12
America's Next Top Model's first trans contestant keeps it moving. By Michael-Christopher

DEEP INSIDE TON3X 16
L. Michael Gipson's indepth interview with the recently out, controversial gospel superstar.

A JOURNEY INTO MANHOOD 21
Michael-Christopher's interview with female-to-male transgender Tiq Milan.

FUNNY LADY 24
Lisa Joyner gets serious with comedian Karen Williams.

A CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT 27
Jamil Fletcher interviews the king of the Black America Pageant, Bennie Mosley.

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR 9
by Michael-Christopher

ARTS 15
The multi-talented rapper/spoken word artist, KAOZ by Clarence* J. Fluker

MUSIC 15
MC reviews Foxxjazell's *Boy, Girl, Whateva*

"AS I SEE IT" 26
Column by Rob Smith

EVENTS FOR US 30
Get involved!

On the Cover:
Isis King wearing a brown paisley dress by Tyrell Collections - tyrelldesigns@msn.com
Photo: Don Harris

©2010 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT REYATAZ® (atazanavir sulfate)

INDICATION: REYATAZ is a prescription medicine used in combination with other medicines to treat people who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). REYATAZ has been studied in a 48-week trial in patients who have taken anti-HIV medicines and a 96-week trial in patients who have never taken anti-HIV medicines.

REYATAZ does not cure HIV or lower your chance of passing HIV to others.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Do not take REYATAZ if you are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients.

Do not take REYATAZ if you are taking the following medicines due to potential for serious, life-threatening side effects or death: Versed® (midazolam) when taken by mouth, Halcion® (triazolam), ergot medicines (dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, and methylergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, ergotrate maleate, Methergine®, and others), Propulsid® (cisapride), or Orap® (pimozide).

Do not take REYATAZ with the following medicines due to potential for serious side effects: Camptosar® (irinotecan), Crixivan® (indinavir), Mevacor® (lovastatin), or Zocor® (simvastatin).

Do not take REYATAZ with the following medicines as they may lower the amount of REYATAZ in your blood, which may lead to increased HIV viral load and resistance to REYATAZ or other anti-HIV medicines: rifampin (also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®), St. John's wort *(Hypericum perforatum)*-containing products, or Viramune® (nevirapine).

Do not take Vfend® (voriconazole) if you are taking REYATAZ and Norvir® (ritonavir).

The above lists of medicines are not complete. **Taking REYATAZ with some other medicines may require your therapy to be monitored more closely or may require a change in dose or dose schedule of REYATAZ or the other medicine.** Discuss with your healthcare provider all prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamin and herbal supplements, or other health preparations you are taking or plan to take.

Tell your healthcare provider if you are **pregnant, breast-feeding**, planning to become pregnant or breast-feed, or if you have **end-stage kidney disease** managed with hemodialysis or **severe liver dysfunction**.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any side effects, symptoms, or conditions, including the following:

- **Mild rash** (redness and itching) without other symptoms sometimes occurs in patients taking REYATAZ, most often in the first few weeks after the medicine is started, and usually goes away within 2 weeks with no change in treatment.
- **Severe rash** has occurred in a small number of patients taking REYATAZ. This type of rash is associated with other symptoms that could be serious and potentially cause death. **If you develop a rash with any of the following symptoms, stop using REYATAZ and call your healthcare provider right away:**
  - Shortness of breath
  - General ill-feeling or "flu-like" symptoms
  - Fever
  - Muscle or joint aches
  - Conjunctivitis (red or inflamed eyes, like "pink-eye")
  - Blisters
  - Mouth sores
  - Swelling of your face
- **Yellowing of the skin and/or eyes** may occur due to increases in bilirubin levels in the blood (bilirubin is made by the liver).
- **A change in the way your heart beats** may occur. You may feel dizzy or lightheaded. These could be symptoms of a heart problem.
- **Diabetes and high blood sugar** may occur in patients taking protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ. Some patients may need changes in their diabetes medicine.
- **If you have liver disease,** including hepatitis B or C, it may get worse when you take anti-HIV medicines like REYATAZ.
- **Kidney stones** have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ. Signs or symptoms of kidney stones include pain in your side, blood in your urine, and pain when you urinate.
- **Some patients with hemophilia** have increased bleeding problems with protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ.
- **Changes in body fat** have been seen in some patients taking anti-HIV medicines. The cause and long-term effects are not known at this time.
- **Gallbladder disorders** (including gallstones and gallbladder inflammation) have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ.

Other common side effects of REYATAZ taken with other anti-HIV medicines include: nausea; headache; stomach pain; vomiting; diarrhea; depression; fever; dizziness; trouble sleeping; numbness, tingling, or burning of hands or feet; and muscle pain.

You should take REYATAZ once daily with food (a meal or snack). Swallow the capsules whole; do not open the capsules. You should take REYATAZ and your other anti-HIV medicines exactly as instructed by your healthcare provider.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

On REYATAZ,

REYATAZ®

(atazanavir sulfate) 200 mg/300 mg capsules

Fight HIV your way.

Please see Important Patient Information about REYATAZ on adjacent pages.

how you spend your time is up to you.

Once-daily REYATAZ can fit into your schedule and help fight your HIV.

REYATAZ, a protease inhibitor (PI), in HIV combination therapy:

- Can help lower your viral load and raise your T-cell (CD4+ cell) count
- Has a low chance of diarrhea (shown in clinical trials)*
- Is taken once a day with a snack or meal

* REYATAZ in combination therapy had a 1%-3% rate of moderate-to-severe diarrhea in adults.

REYATAZ is one of several treatment options your doctor may consider.

Ask your healthcare team about REYATAZ. www.REYATAZ.com

REYATAZ does not cure HIV, a serious disease, and has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others.

Bristol-Myers Squibb

REYATAZ is a registered trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners and not of Bristol-Myers Squibb.
© 2010 Bristol-Myers Squibb, Princeton, NJ 08543 U.S.A.
687US09AB23303 1/10

If you or someone you know needs help paying for medicine, call 1-888-4PPA-NOW (1-888-477-2669). Or go to www.pparx.org

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

Patient Information

REYATAZ® (RAY-ah-taz)
(generic name = **atazanavir sulfate**)
Capsules

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with REYATAZ (atazanavir sulfate). Read the section "What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?"

Read the Patient Information that comes with REYATAZ before you start using it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This leaflet provides a summary about REYATAZ and does not include everything there is to know about your medicine. This information does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is REYATAZ?

REYATAZ is a prescription medicine used with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV is the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). REYATAZ is a type of anti-HIV medicine called a protease inhibitor. HIV infection destroys CD4+ (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of (T) cells are destroyed, AIDS develops. REYATAZ helps to block HIV protease, an enzyme that is needed for the HIV virus to multiply. REYATAZ may lower the amount of HIV in your blood, help your body keep its supply of CD4+ (T) cells, and reduce the risk of death and illness associated with HIV.

Does REYATAZ cure HIV or AIDS?

REYATAZ does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. At present there is no cure for HIV infection. People taking REYATAZ may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking REYATAZ.**

REYATAZ does not lower your chance of passing HIV to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take REYATAZ?

Do not take REYATAZ if you:

- **are taking certain medicines.** (See "What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?") Serious life-threatening side effects or death may happen. Before you take REYATAZ, tell your healthcare provider about all medicines you are taking or planning to take. These include other prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
- **are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients.** The active ingredient is atazanavir sulfate. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in REYATAZ. Tell your healthcare provider if you think you have had an allergic reaction to any of these ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before I take REYATAZ?

Tell your healthcare provider:

- **If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** It is not known if REYATAZ can harm your unborn baby. Pregnant women have experienced serious side effects when taking REYATAZ with other HIV medicines called nucleoside analogues. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if REYATAZ is right for you. If you use REYATAZ while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **If you are breast-feeding.** You should not breast-feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing HIV to your baby. Also, it is not known if REYATAZ can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **If you have liver problems or are infected with the hepatitis B or C virus.** See "What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?"
- **If you have end stage kidney disease** managed with hemodialysis.
- **If you have diabetes.** See "What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?"
- **If you have hemophilia.** See "What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?"
- **About all the medicines you take** including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Keep a list of your medicines with you to show your healthcare provider. For more information, see "What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?" and "Who should not take REYATAZ?" Some medicines can cause serious side effects if taken with REYATAZ.

How should I take REYATAZ?

- **Take REYATAZ once every day exactly as instructed by your healthcare provider.** Your healthcare provider will prescribe the amount of REYATAZ that is right for you.
  - For adults who have never taken anti-HIV medicines before, the dose is 300 mg once daily with 100 mg of NORVIR® (ritonavir) once daily taken with food. For adults who are unable to tolerate ritonavir, 400 mg (two 200-mg capsules) once daily (without NORVIR®) taken with food is recommended.
  - For adults who have taken anti-HIV medicines in the past, the usual dose is 300 mg plus 100 mg of NORVIR® (ritonavir) once daily taken with food.
- Your dose will depend on your liver function and on the other anti-HIV medicines that you are taking. REYATAZ is always used with other anti-HIV medicines. If you are taking REYATAZ with SUSTIVA® (efavirenz) or with VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate), you should also be taking NORVIR® (ritonavir).
- **Always take REYATAZ with food** (a meal or snack) to help it work better. Swallow the capsules whole. **Do not open the capsules.** Take REYATAZ at the same time each day.
- **If you are taking antacids or didanosine (VIDEX® or VIDEX® EC)**, take REYATAZ 2 hours before or 1 hour after these medicines.
- **If you are taking medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), ZANTAC® (ranitidine), AcipHex® (rabeprazole), NEXIUM® (esomeprazole), PREVACID® (lansoprazole), PRILOSEC® (omeprazole), or PROTONIX® (pantoprazole)**, talk to your healthcare provider.
- **Do not change your dose or stop taking REYATAZ without first talking with your healthcare provider.** It is important to stay under a healthcare provider's care while taking REYATAZ.
- **When your supply of REYATAZ starts to run low,** get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. It is important not to run out of REYATAZ. The amount of HIV in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time.
- **If you miss a dose of REYATAZ,** take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If, however, it is within 6 hours of your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of REYATAZ or your other anti-HIV medicines.**
- **If you take more than the prescribed dose of REYATAZ,** call your healthcare provider or poison control center right away.

Can children take REYATAZ?

Dosing recommendations are available for children 6 years of age and older for REYATAZ Capsules. Dosing recommendations are not available for children from 3 months to less than 6 years of age. REYATAZ should not be used in babies under the age of 3 months.

What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?

The following list of side effects is **not** complete. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider. If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

The following side effects have been reported with REYATAZ:

- **mild rash** (redness and itching) without other symptoms sometimes occurs in patients taking REYATAZ, most often in the first few weeks after the medicine is started. Rashes usually go away within 2 weeks with no change in treatment. Tell your healthcare provider if rash occurs.
- **severe rash:** In a small number of patients, a rash can develop that is associated with other symptoms which could be serious and potentially cause death.

  If you develop a rash with any of the following symptoms stop using REYATAZ and call your healthcare provider right away:
  - shortness of breath
  - general ill feeling or "flu-like" symptoms
  - fever
  - muscle or joint aches
  - conjunctivitis (red or inflamed eyes, like "pink eye")
  - blisters
  - mouth sores
  - swelling of your face

- **yellowing of the skin or eyes.** These effects may be due to increases in bilirubin levels in the blood (bilirubin is made by the liver). Call your healthcare provider if your skin or the white part of your eyes turn yellow. Although these effects may not be damaging to your liver, skin, or eyes, it is important to tell your healthcare provider promptly if they occur.
- **a change in the way your heart beats (heart rhythm change).** Call your healthcare provider right away if you get dizzy or lightheaded. These could be symptoms of a heart problem.
- **diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia)** sometimes happen in patients taking protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ. Some patients had diabetes before taking protease inhibitors while others did not. Some patients may need changes in their diabetes medicine.
- **if you have liver disease** including hepatitis B or C, your liver disease may get worse when you take anti-HIV medicines like REYATAZ.
- **kidney stones** have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ. If you develop signs or symptoms of kidney stones (pain in your side, blood in your urine, pain when you urinate) tell your healthcare provider promptly.
- **some patients with hemophilia** have increased bleeding problems with protease inhibitors like REYATAZ.
- **changes in body fat.** These changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

Other common side effects of REYATAZ taken with other anti-HIV medicines include nausea; headache; stomach pain; vomiting; diarrhea; depression; fever; dizziness; trouble sleeping; numbness, tingling, or burning of hands or feet; and muscle pain.

Gallbladder disorders (which may include gallstones and gallbladder inflammation) have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ.

What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?

Do not take REYATAZ if you take the following medicines (not all brands may be listed; tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take). REYATAZ may cause serious, life-threatening side effects or death when used with these medicines.

- Ergot medicines: dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, and methylergonovine such as CAFERGOT®, MIGRANAL®, D.H.E. 45®, ergotrate maleate, METHERGINE®, and others (used for migraine headaches).
- ORAP® (pimozide, used for Tourette's disorder).
- PROPULSID® (cisapride, used for certain stomach problems).
- Triazolam, also known as HALCION® (used for insomnia).
- Midazolam, also known as VERSED® (used for sedation), when taken by mouth.

Do not take the following medicines with REYATAZ because of possible serious side effects:

- CAMPTOSAR® (irinotecan, used for cancer).
- CRIXIVAN® (indinavir, used for HIV infection). Both REYATAZ and CRIXIVAN sometimes cause increased levels of bilirubin in the blood.
- Cholesterol-lowering medicines MEVACOR® (lovastatin) or ZOCOR® (simvastatin).

Do not take the following medicines with REYATAZ because they may lower the amount of REYATAZ in your blood. This may lead to an increased HIV viral load. Resistance to REYATAZ or cross-resistance to other HIV medicines may develop:

- Rifampin (also known as RIMACTANE®, RIFADIN®, RIFATER®, or RIFAMATE®, used for tuberculosis).
- St. John's wort *(Hypericum perforatum)*, an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort.
- VIRAMUNE® (nevirapine, used for HIV infection).

Do not take the following medicine if you are taking REYATAZ and NORVIR® together:

- VFEND® (voriconazole).

The following medicines may require your healthcare provider to monitor your therapy more closely:

- CIALIS® (tadalafil), LEVITRA® (vardenafil), or VIAGRA® (sildenafil). REYATAZ may increase the chances of serious side effects that can happen with CIALIS, LEVITRA, or VIAGRA. Do not use CIALIS, LEVITRA, or VIAGRA while you are taking REYATAZ unless your healthcare provider tells you it is okay.
- LIPITOR® (atorvastatin) or CRESTOR® (rosuvastatin). There is an increased chance of serious side effects if you take REYATAZ with this cholesterol-lowering medicine.
- Medicines for abnormal heart rhythm: CORDARONE® (amiodarone), lidocaine, quinidine (also known as CARDIOQUIN®, QUINIDEX®, and others).
- VASCOR® (bepridil, used for chest pain).

REYATAZ® (atazanavir sulfate)

- COUMADIN® (warfarin).
- Tricyclic antidepressants such as ELAVIL® (amitriptyline), NORPRAMIN® (desipramine), SINEQUAN® (doxepin), SURMONTIL® (trimipramine), TOFRANIL® (imipramine), or VIVACTIL® (protriptyline).
- Medicines to prevent organ transplant rejection: SANDIMMUNE® or NEORAL® (cyclosporin), RAPAMUNE® (sirolimus), or PROGRAF® (tacrolimus).
- The antidepressant trazodone (DESYREL® and others).
- Fluticasone propionate (ADVAIR®, FLONASE®, FLOVENT®), given by nose or inhaled to treat allergic symptoms or asthma. Your doctor may choose not to keep you on fluticasone, especially if you are also taking NORVIR®.

The following medicines may require a change in the dose or dose schedule of either REYATAZ or the other medicine:

- INVIRASE® (saquinavir).
- NORVIR® (ritonavir).
- SUSTIVA® (efavirenz).
- Antacids or buffered medicines.
- VIDEX® (didanosine).
- VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate).
- MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin).
- Calcium channel blockers such as CARDIZEM® or TIAZAC® (diltiazem), COVERA-HS® or ISOPTIN SR® (verapamil) and others.
- BIAXIN® (clarithromycin).
- Medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), or ZANTAC® (ranitidine).

Talk to your healthcare provider about choosing an effective method of contraception. REYATAZ may affect the safety and effectiveness of hormonal contraceptives such as birth control pills or the contraceptive patch. Hormonal contraceptives do not prevent the spread of HIV to others.

Remember:

1. **Know all the medicines you take.**
2. **Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take.**
3. **Do not start a new medicine without talking to your healthcare provider.**

How should I store REYATAZ?

- Store REYATAZ Capsules at room temperature, 59° to 86° F (15° to 30° C). Do **not** store this medicine in a damp place such as a bathroom medicine cabinet or near the kitchen sink.
- Keep your medicine in a tightly closed container.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children and pets at all times. Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Dispose of unused medicines through community take-back disposal programs when available or place REYATAZ in an unrecognizable, closed container in the household trash.

General information about REYATAZ

This medicine was prescribed for your particular condition. Do not use REYATAZ for another condition. Do not give REYATAZ to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them. **Keep REYATAZ and all medicines out of the reach of children and pets.**

This summary does not include everything there is to know about REYATAZ. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Remember no written summary can replace careful discussion with your healthcare provider. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider or you can call 1-800-321-1335.

What are the ingredients in REYATAZ?

Active Ingredient: atazanavir sulfate

Inactive Ingredients: Crospovidone, lactose monohydrate (milk sugar), magnesium stearate, gelatin, FD&C Blue #2, and titanium dioxide.

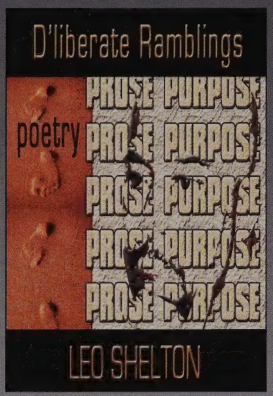
VIDEX® and REYATAZ® are registered trademarks of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. COUMADIN® and SUSTIVA® are registered trademarks of Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharma Company. DESYREL® is a registered trademark of Mead Johnson and Company. Other brands listed are the trademarks of their respective owners and are not trademarks of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.

US Patent Nos: 5,849,911 and 6,087,383

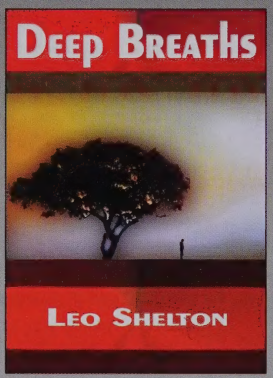
Bristol-Myers Squibb
Princeton, NJ 08543 USA

1246226A5 F1-B0001B-11-09 Rev November 2009

Available NOW!
New releases from Tugson Press and the 2008 IPPY Award winning author and poet, Leo Shelton.



D'liberate Ramblings
Poetry by Leo Shelton
Tugson Press
ISBN: 0-9791786-3-0
U.S. $12.00



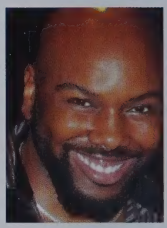
Deep Breaths
Poetry by Leo Shelton
Tugson Press
ISBN: 0-9791786-4-9
U.S. $12.00

TUGSON
PRESS

www.tugsonpress.com

Tugson Press
P.O. Box 429
Temple Hills, MD 20757

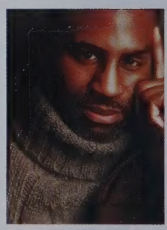
contributors



L. Michael Gipson is an Oakland-based cultural critic, community health planner and award-winning youth advocate. His sociopolitical essays have been published in two anthologies, including *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* (Chester Hartman, ed.). As a cultural critic and music journalist, Gipson's work has appeared in *Clik*, *Pulse*, *Arise*, *Pride*, *Amplify*, *Urban Dialect*, *Port of Harlem* and *Creative Loafing ATL*. He is editor and columnist at www.SoulTracks.com and heard weekly as "Cornfed" on *The Dave Brown Radio Show*.

Lisa Joyner is a freelance writer/editor, activist and a producer on WPFW's LGBT radio show, *Inside Out*, in Washington, D.C. Her recent work includes poetry in the anthologies *Growing Up Girl: A Manifesta* and *Just Like a Girl*. She lives in Washington, D.C.

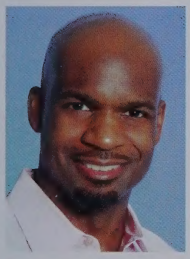
Clarence* J. Fluker is a freelance writer and blogger based in Washington, D.C. His work has appeared in a variety of print and online publications including *ARISE* magazine, where he served as Next Generation editor. His essay, "A Nation Divided," appears in the acclaimed anthology *Spirited* from RedBone Press. Fluker earned his undergraduate degree from Morgan State University and his graduate degree from American University.



Don E. Harris is a native of the District of Columbia, a civil servant and freelance photographer. A photojournalist at heart, his work runs the gamut, from documentary-style street photography to high fashion commercial portraiture. His work can be seen frequently in the *Washington City Paper*. Harris is the owner/operator of Don Harris Photographics, LLC. He has a degree in architecture from Hampton University. A self-taught photographer, he continues to hone his skills by studying great amateurs and masters of the craft. http://donharris.viewbook.com/

Washington, D.C. native **Yardé Noir** began Genesys Productions before graduating from Duke Ellington School of the Arts in 1997. Noir went on to Bennett Career Institute majoring in hair and make-up, lending his talents as an experienced cosmetologist. Noir has worked as a make-up artist for Smashbox Cosmetics and Pretty by PR, and sits on the artistic team for Joya Cosmetics. Noir is the 2008 Elite Beauty Make-Up Competition Winner. Noir also attended the Art Institute of Washington majoring in graphic design and is currently pursuing a master educator's license.

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com



MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR

JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/MARKETING/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:
RIVENDELL MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

From the Editor

When I was first looking for black LGBT community, back in the mid '80s, I dreamed of going to clubs in New York City, like the Garage and Tracks, and mustering the nerve to hang out on Christopher Street. I finally did find those places and other men like me, as well as women. But one segment of the black gay populace that I hadn't banked on seeing was transgender people.

"Drag queens," as we called them then, weren't to be acknowledged. When a drag queen was around, you would undoubtedly hear "look at her!" coming from someone poking fun. The kids seemed to think that if you looked directly at one, you might turn into a drag queen yourself. At that time we couldn't even conceive of a female-to-male transgender, or drag king. That would come much later.

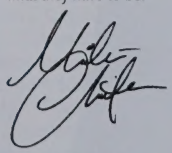
Still, these girls held their heads up high, amidst the giggling, the reading and the hypocrisy. They strutted through the club or down the strip like proud Clydesdales, paying the looks and insults no mind. They knew they were fierce; they didn't need anyone else's opinion.

But no one really stopped to think that if we hadn't been in our safe (for some) spaces, we too could have been subject to the same type of ridicule, or worse. Thankfully, I realized that we had no right to feel any kind of way about these women because as black gays and lesbians, we were just as marginalized. It is atrocious for any black people to organize against any other minority group that is fighting for the same rights and opportunities.

No one will soon forget how Republicans recently stirred up the black church against gays and lesbians—their own sons and daughters—encouraging the very institution at the forefront of the civil rights movement to deny others basic rights. Even though the Republicans are now a minority, the wounds run deep, and the hatred continues—and so do the sermons spouting hate. In fact, one of Washington, D.C.'s largest houses of worship is a supplier of much of that hate.

In this issue of SWERV we speak with three very brave young people who are stepping up and out as who they are despite resistance, criticism and ignorance. Tiq Milan, an LGBT youth coordinator, freelance writer and transman; Isis King, a model, fashion designer, actress and transwoman; and Ton3x, a newly out gospel superstar dodging vitriol from his former allies in the pulpit.

Since my unenlightened days long ago, I have met, worked with, fellowshipped and collaborated with trans folk and loved every minute. I continue to hear stories about our emerging family members all over the country and hold them up in pride as I would myself. Trans people aren't doing what they do just to unnerve people. Just like I am same-gender loving, trans is who they are and what they have to be.



Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

Subscribe to
swerv
magazine
For just $16
Never miss an issue of America's favorite black LGBT quarterly magazine!
Just log on to www.SWERVMAG.com and order online!
Get your subscription today!
Find us on Facebook : SWERV MAG

What's the "T" on Transgender Life?

Words/Jamil Fletcher

Black men and women who consider themselves transgender are often the face of the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, despite the fact that being transgender has little to do with sexual orientation. Their physical appearance challenges mainstream gender roles in ways that gay men and lesbian women do not. The intensity of their expression of a gender that differs from their birth sex forces them to publicly address a very private and personal issue. "Am I a man or a woman?"

So, what's the "T" about transgender life?

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) defines a transgender person as an individual whose gender identity, expression or behavior is not traditionally associated with their birth sex. This includes transsexuals and cross-dressers. (Transvestite, another word for cross-dresser, is considered a derogatory term.)

No hard data exist on the percentage of people who identify as transgender. The American Psychiatric Association projects that one in 30,000 adult males and one in 100,000 adult females seek sex reassignment, but this statistic is limiting in scope (not all transgender people want to have surgery) and not based on a contemporary U.S. population. Even less is known about transgender people within the African American community.

While one might think that those living the "T" life may appear to be very different, most trans people lead lives much like everyone else. They are parents, they go to work, they pay taxes and they also go to church – when accepted. Brian Watson, director of programs for Transgender Health Empowerment (T.H.E.) in the District of Columbia, dispels some of the myths. "Transgender women are not all drag queens, or prostitutes," he says. "They have diverse occupations and skill sets, and are a valued part of our community." Watson introduces me to Mellisa, 22, who works as a receptionist for a nonprofit. She is also a student, working to complete her GED.

Every segment of the African-American community faces challenges; black women are disproportionately impacted by health issues like breast cancer and HIV/AIDS, black men represent approximately 50% of men in prison, and the unemployment rate for black people is typically much higher than the national rate. Being black and transgender comes with even more challenges. Watson says, "Because of the uniqueness of the transgender community I would say discrimination is the root of many issues transgender men and women face. Discrimination in schools leads to dropping out of school. Discrimination during a job interview may lead to not getting a job. And discrimination from the community, family members and church, etc. leads to a feeling of abandonment and depression."

Finding employment is a major issue for transgender women. Regardless of their experience and educational background, they are often unemployed or under-employed. As Mellisa explains, "Some positions are just not open to someone like me. Things change once they see my identification and learn my birth sex is male." Currently, federal laws do not protect transgender people from workplace discrimination, but some state and local municipalities have enacted laws to protect this population. The District of Columbia, California, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Minnesota are a few of the states with legal protections in place. According to a report from the Human Rights Campaign (*Transgender Americans: A Handbook for Understanding*), 78 local jurisdictions have such laws on the books. Some of the cities with protections include Chicago, New York, Los Angeles and Dallas.

As one would imagine, finding a well-informed primary care physician is challenging, to say the least, for a transgender man or woman. While many wish to transition from their birth sex, the expense of hormone therapy and sex reassignment surgery tends to be cost prohibitive, especially since health care coverage typically excludes such services. Mellisa laments, "I'm not looking to fully transition, but I would like to get a few things done (breast, nose, etc…). The hormones are expensive." Many choose alternate means to obtain the hormones through medically unsupervised procedures, which tends to be a risky proposition.

Whether it's finding a job, renting an apartment or acquiring appropriate legal documents, transgender people face struggles in their normal life that gay men and lesbian women do not. Mellisa offers an interesting historical connection. "Being transgender is like slavery all over again," she says. "We are not accepted. We can't use certain restrooms and we're not permitted to do certain things. It's like history repeating itself."

Watson wants to remind us about a few important things. "Transgender men and women are not confused or [don't] just decide one day they want to be the opposite sex," he says. "Most transgender people … will tell you they have always felt like the opposite sex and were born that way. One big issue is that people often confuse transgender people as being gay and that is not the case. Transgender people identify as the opposite sex; it has nothing to do with sexual orientation."

Mellisa is optimistic about her future. "I'm just trying to stay focused and positive, not negative," she says. Her work with youth as a peer educator teaching others about HIV/AIDS, and how to stay safe (for sex workers) permits her to share some very valuable life experiences. Now that's the "T"!

Resources to learn more about issues facing transgender people:
Transgender Health Empowerment, www.theincdc.org
National Center for Transgender Equality, www.transequality.org
Transgender Law and Policy Institute, www.transgenderlaw.org

Isis King's not going to let losing the *Top Model* crown get her down. This girl's talented, strong and reaching for the stars.

THE MIGHTY ISIS ON HER WAY UP

Words/Michael-Christopher
Photos/Don Harris

Hair & Make Up/Yardé Noir
Styling/Jarmal Harris & Marcus Wiley

Black Trench Coat
Kiny Bis Boutique
$200

It's been a year and half since 24-year-old Isis King appeared on the hit FOX reality show *America's Next Top Model*, but the world's most-watched transwoman hasn't let the end of that competition become the end of her world. In fact, it wasn't even the beginning.

Amazingly, nearly each phase of King's transition has been captured on television. King's first appearance was as a guest on the MSNBC series titled "Born in the Wrong Body" (the term she prefers to "transgender") in 2007. The show, which documented the lives of transgender people across the United States, caught King at the beginning of her transitioning process: age 21, living as a female while taking female hormones. One of the network's staff spotted her on the streets of New York City and approached her about being on the show. By that time, King had already graduated from the Art Institute of Philadelphia, where she had a full scholarship for fashion design, and won the Industry Award for Best Evening Wear Collection.

Oddly enough, fashion wasn't King's first love. Like many young boys, King was fascinated with comics and would draw superheroes, longing to be a comic book illustrator. Later, King realized that she was spending more time on her heroine's hair and costumes than having them save the world. She thought, "Hey, wait, I'm not a comic book artist, I'm a fashion designer!" and soon traded in her comics for *Vogue* magazine. "It's a getaway from all the problems of the world," King says, describing her love for fashion. "I love expression, I love color." In the tenth grade, she observed her cousin making clothes, taught herself how to sew and began honing her craft.

Around the time of the MSNBC appearance, King was living in New York's Ali Forney Center, an organization that provides housing for homeless LGBT youth. *America's Next Top Model* was planning a homeless-themed fashion shoot, collaborating with the Reciprocity Foundation, an organization that helps to put homeless and high-risk youth into careers. The shoot featured the *ANTM* contestants in rags while homeless women from the program, including King, were in the background dressed in haute couture. When the show's host and creator, Tyra Banks, was editing, she noticed King's couture poses outshone the actual *ANTM* contestant and said, "Who the hell is that girl?" Banks was told that King wasn't born female, but that didn't shake the former supermodel, who is well known for her support of the LGBT community. Banks arranged for King to be on the next cycle of the show.

Although the producers were aware that King was born a male, the other 11 *ANTM* finalists weren't informed. Eventually, the cat came out of the bag: One of the women felt that something was different with King and the whispering began. King was elsewhere in the room, but could feel the climate change. "I knew when she knew," she explains. "Then the one girl came over and said, 'Hey, can we talk to you really quickly?'" King owned up but was not apologetic; she knew the opportunity she had been given and planned to take full advantage of it. "It's not about the girls, it's not about telling anybody. I came there for myself," she says. "I didn't come to educate anybody. I'm a woman just like any other girl there, and I came there to win just like any other girl."

"I didn't come to educate anybody. I'm a woman just like any other."

After coming out as "born in the wrong body," King got back to her game, but unfortunately was eliminated, placing tenth of fourteen *ANTM* contestants. King, still pre-op, was only on hormone therapy, had no breasts and still had male genitalia, making the swimsuit shoots extremely difficult. "People don't understand," she says. "That was only a year into my transition, which in that timeline is a very, very short period of time." Not only was King criticized for her performance in the shoots, but Banks had some choice words about her look during eliminations. King says the criticism was a challenge, but has no regrets. "I knew that was a part of it and this is what I wanted," she says.

After leaving *ANTM*, King appeared, with her mother, Sharray, on *The Tyra Banks Show*. Sharray admitted it was hard to deal with her son's transition to female; she said she cried for months, but ultimately realized what really mattered was she still had her child. King also got the opportunity to tell her whole story and confront Clark Gilmer, one of the contestants who was extremely intolerant and ignorant.

During the *ANTM* competition, Gilmer called King a "he/she," drag queen and threatened to "stomp that man" out of the competition if she proved to be a contender. Despite all the insults, Gilmer claimed she had no intentions of hurting King and loved her as a person, but disagreed with her choices; referred to King as having gender identity disorder as if it were a disease; and claimed being from the South was her excuse for being so intolerant. King maturely responded by saying Gilmer crossed the line, and her disagreement shouldn't have resulted in such displays of disrespect.

Most groundbreaking on that *Tyra Banks Show* was Dr. Marci Bowers, a leading genital reassignment surgeon, who surprised King by offering to evaluate her for sex reassignment surgery and raise money to pay for it. King eagerly agreed as Banks asked if she could follow her journey. A few months after the surgery was complete, King returned to *The Tyra Banks Show* for another round, airing footage of her before and after the procedure.

This time, King brought a very special friend along with her to the show; Desmond, a longtime, pre-transition buddy who became her boyfriend. He proposed on air and King accepted, but soon after, they decided to call it off. Still, it was an empowering moment that showed love and relationships for trans people are possible.

Although King wanted desperately

to have the sex reassignment surgery, she says, "I thought it would make a bigger impact on me." She says she feels sexier when looking in the mirror, walking around at home in her short shorts, but realized, "people can't look at you and tell." To feel more complete, King knew she needed to get some work "up top." "People can look at you and tell you have breasts. I never had breasts," she says. For a while, her lack of breasts stunted her designing; her motivation was lost and she put a halt to creating clothes. But King had her "top surgery" earlier this year, is now healed and back to designing. In fact, King believes if she were back on *ANTM* now she would go much further.

King has no time for regrets or what-could-have-been. She's resilient; she's matured and she's moved on. She hasn't let the hurtful words from her former fellow contestants bring her down or lost love keep her eye off the prize. Just like her namesake, Isis is strong, fierce and mighty and is delving into new areas of creativity.

King's latest passion is acting. Last year, she had the opportunity to play a domestic violence victim in the Laurinda D. Brown production, *Walk Like a Man*. "It really helped me to express different characters and different roles," she says. The role was especially important to her because it was more that just playing the trans prostitute—the role for which trans female actors are typically cast. King is also starring in the upcoming film, *Bella Maddo*, a movie featuring an all-trans cast playing biologically born females; she plays a glamorous socialite. She will also make a return to television for her third appearance on *The Tyra Banks Show*, seeing Banks off during her final season. King adds that she'd love to be on the NBC series *Heroes*. "I can be the villain, I can be the good girl," she says. "Just give me powers and get me on that show!"

Although she says she did not go on *ANTM* to educate anyone, she has realized her place in history and embraced the responsibility it brings. King has been speaking on college campuses, inspiring others and letting them know they're not alone. She's also taken on the moniker of "The Trans-Experience Guru" and started a question/answer blog at www.formspring.me/isisking. "I'm not here to be a savior," she says, "but I know that there are so many young people who look up to me. They don't have anybody young who can answer some of their questions." Perhaps with Banks' show ending this year, there will be room for *Ask Isis*.

It doesn't stop there. King is also working on a music project. "I've always been told, 'focus on one thing,'" she says. "If you have so many talents, why not do everything? You never know which one will be the one thing to takes it to the next level." And with this woman's drive, determination and vision, she can go nowhere but up.

A Kaotic Intervention

Words/Clarence* J. Fluker

Not everything or everyone in Minneapolis is cold. In fact, the rapper/spoken word artist Kevin "Kaoz" Moore is quite hot—and so is the content and approach to his upcoming release, *The Intervention*.

Born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio, Kaoz at a very young age began exploring the use of language and art as a way to explore himself and the world in which he lived. He started writing poetry in elementary school; as a young adult, his spoken word performances took flight in 1998 as part of Black Poetic Society, a Cleveland performance ensemble, and later with Evolutionary Writer's Theatre. In 2002 and 2003 he represented Cleveland in the National Poetry Slam competition. He packed his politics and poetry and pumped to the Twin Cities in 2004; he continues to make a name for himself in the St. Paul-Minneapolis area as a hip-hop artist and poet, and has an ever-growing list of fans across the United States.

Similar to the conventional meaning of the word intervention, his CD *The Intervention* flows like an individual counseling session. Both the patient and therapist in the counseling session are Kaoz; through a series of songs and spoken word pieces he engages the listener with a dialogue on the layers and complexities of living as an African-American gay male. He strokes and penetrates issues ranging from internalized homophobia and cross-cultural racism in the gay community to the black church's role in alienating their own marginalized followers.

"By far, *The Intervention* is taking my level of disclosure to another level," says Kaoz. "It's a snapshot of my life as an adult gay male who is no longer afraid. I am very honest in my music and poetry, but here I wanted to demonstrate the first step to recovery or a cure is acknowledgment—no matter how painful it is or how vulnerable it makes us."

Kaoz believes that, as an artist, his position is to speak on what we don't speak enough about. He does this even when he isn't behind a microphone or in front of an audience. Kaoz has done significant work with numerous HIV/health education programs in the Midwest that focus on young men who have sex with men (MSM). Ultimately, Kaoz envisions developing *The Intervention* into a touring full solo performance piece that can be used as a vehicle to empower and educate MSM of all races and ages. It's not a far-fetched idea for someone who has three playwright credits already (for *Baba King*, *Unseen: The Book of Job* and *Voices: The Rhythm of Me*).

Very easy on the eyes and easy to listen to, Kaoz attracts diverse—straight and gay—audiences. He has been climbing the Twin Cities ReverbNation hip hop chart, where he's been consistently ranked in the top 20 among more than 500 local acts. He credits his boom on the scene to the St. Paul-Minneapolis community who supported him when he first arrived. "If it wasn't for the Twin Cities GLBT community, my career would have been snail's pace and name nonexistent," he says. "'Da family' allows me to let go and enjoy every moment I have to share."

Through networks such as GayMusicRevolution.com and OutHipHop.com he has connected to and been supported by a number of other talented SGL artists from across the country.

Rapper/spoken word artist/playwright, Kevin "Kaoz" Moore

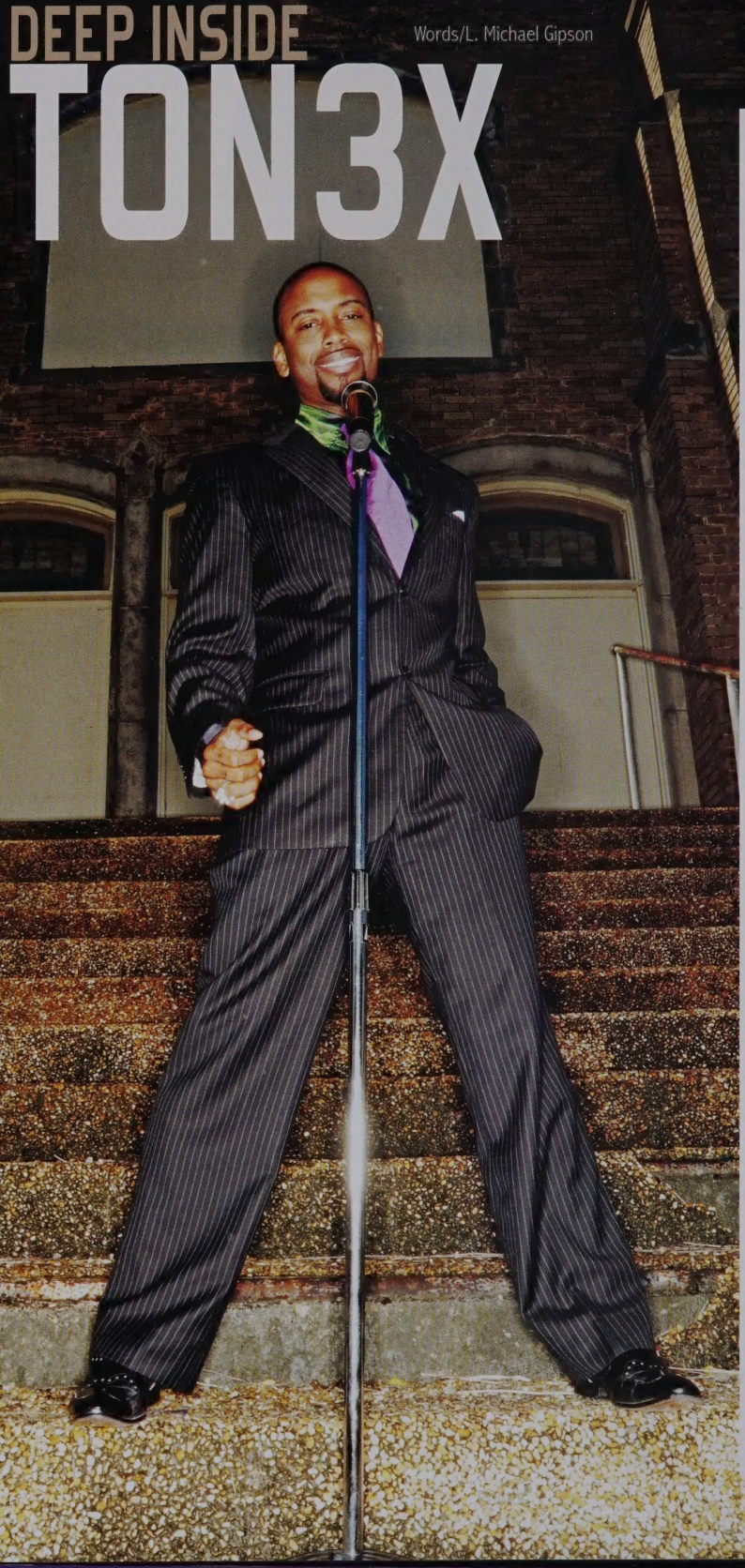
Photo: David Rubedor

His feeling of attachment to the national Homo Hip Hop movement is built on positive energy and opportunities to collaborate with other artists.

"I owe it to the Creator to use my gifts and communicate what he puts in my heart and mind to communicate to others," he explains. "There is way more to GLBT culture and community than our sexual prowess or track record, or a diss, or our labels. People are still dying, living in poverty, sexually assaulted and trapped in the cycles of substance use and self-hate. So I make my music for those people. I hope that it gives someone a ray of hope. Or at least faith that the trouble won't last, and you can pull yourself through. And that it's never too late to redeem yourself and follow your dreams." Listen to his tracks and pick up *The Intervention* on his site www.reverbnation.com/kevinkaozmoore.

DEEP INSIDE TON3X

Words/L. Michael Gipson



Though his songs can be heard in C.O.G.I.C. (Church of God in Christ) pews across the nation, Anthony "Tonéx" Williams III (now Ton3x) is unlikely to be as welcome there as his hit songs "Personal Jesus," "God Has Not 4Got" and the wailing floor plea, "Make Me Over." Out of 24 albums, this preacher's kid turned pastor has gone gold three times with *Pronounced Toe-nay; O2;* and his career pinnacle, the No. 1 Billboard 2004 Top Gospel Album double-disk *Out the Box*. The six-octave fashionista has also earned his share of awards and acclaim for his genre-bending, format-jumping, high-energy brand of gospel: six Stellar Awards (including Artist of the Year), a GMA Award, and two Grammy Award nominations, most recently for his single "Bl3nd" ("Blend").

Still, for far too many church-goers—gay and straight—Ton3x has been too unconventional from day one, following in the footsteps of Sam Cooke, Rev. James Cleveland, Walter Hawkins and The Clark Sisters in making his generation's fundamentalist Christians uneasy. His rebellious manner, urban musical liberation and unwillingness to settle down, be meek and fully genuflect to conservative traditions of the church are to blame. Conservative or not, Ton3x has consistently been unabashed in his truth-telling and his wearing of feelings on his sleeve, sometimes to his detriment.

Much has been written and said about Ton3x, particularly since his split from singer Yvette "Ms. Tonéx" Williams five years ago. A well-publicized radio interview about the divorce, record label troubles, financial issues and a calling out of the hypocrisy in the church and gospel worlds seemed to only further Ton3x's rift with the already suspicious church. When the singer unapologetically came out of the closet in 2009 as a bisexual man on the Word Network's *The Lexi Show*, it put an end to years of speculation and rumors that culminated in 2007 with Ton3x erupting on his now infamous *The Naked Truth* mixtape. The project, though artistically brilliant, included Ton3x's cursing rampages and hip-hop declarations of being a "real man" over the "sissies, faggots and bitches" he'd been called by gossipmongers throughout the church and gospel communities.

Three years have passed since then;

Photos Courtesy of TON3X

three years and a lot of changes, including the passing of his mother and an evolving confrontation with "ex-gay" singer Donnie McClurkin. Ton3x is considering leaving the pulpit of the San Diego church he inherited after his father's death in 2004. Now 34, Ton3x is at a crossroads in his life.

SWERV: Right from the start, you've demonstrated unease with following tradition and conformity in your music and presentation. Were moments like the pop-locking Janet Jackson choreography at your Stellar Awards debut, naming your choir "The Peculiar People," or rocking the wild hairstyles and tight clothes calculations or expressions of this unease with church "supposed tos?"

TON3X: I would like to call them calculated risks. But I've always danced to the beat of a different drummer. All of my attempts weren't readily accepted...why would they be? But I know that they were all from a real place. Ask anyone that's known me for at least 20 to 25 years. I've always been the one to do whatever I felt in my heart at the time was true. Right or wrong, I did it boldly and with the most blatant intentions to grab attention for a message bigger than me, or the music that I created. I can't help that people fantasize about doing what I do in reality. We all wanna break out and be bold, proud and intentional. We are just scared of not being accepted. Most people can't afford to live in truth so they excel at a professional lie, and turn around and judge someone that they really admire for doing what they were too afraid to do.

SWERV: We hear very few male singers sustaining their singing in a soprano voice, though far more have the natural ability to do so than have been socially allowed. When and where did you find the fearlessness to sing the full range of your voice, from your basement bass to your most feminine highs? As a vocal coach and choir director, do you see other men purposely holding back out of fear?

TON3X: Well, of course you know I developed a very tough skin early on after being called a sissy and faggot by kids at my church. ...I mean to the point of receiving ignorant answering machine messages about how I sing like a fag. And all of this would happen in front of my parents and they would tell me, "Son, you have a unique gift and everyone is not happy about that." I just kept on singing high and strengthening that register so much so that even puberty didn't change what God had given me. Preaching actually developed my stamina and endurance as a performer and vocalist. I always say, "If you treat your voice like a baby, it will act like one."

SWERV: Are you as fearless in your life as you are in your music, or are you moving courageously in spite of your fears?

It's all about control: TON3X channeling his inner Janet.

TON3X: At this point I am moving on courageously in spite of all of my fears. I am fearless when it comes to being afraid of what people have to say about me. I'm fearless when it comes to what a person can do to me. However, I do fear not having both parents around anymore. You start to feel like an adult orphan. You're afraid because they usually had all of the answers. Now you only have God to depend on. He's become more tangible to me post my mother and father's death. I still can't believe it really happened. My Spiritual Father and second earthly Dad, Bishop Norman L. Wagner, eulogized my mother. Three weeks later, *he* died. [Ton3x's father, Pastor A.C. Williams, died in 2004.] Now, I'm just devastated. I'm not even sure if I'll be able to attend his services. It's all just too soon and too sudden. ...I'm just a little overwhelmed by everything.

SWERV: During the celebrated* Out the Box *phase of your career, you were married, dressing in suits, had cut all your hair, and performed "Make Me Over" on the BET* Celebration of Gospel *with an intimacy and immediacy that read like an earnest plea for heterosexuality. Who was Tonéx then?

TON3X: I shouldn't even answer this. You see, at that time my intention was to move away from any distractions that might take away from the message of that album or administration for that night. I am a little confused as to how shallow a look of grounded swag or "menergy" could ever be mistaken for heterosexuality. I see some artists in gospel do their best to give off major street swag...but hey, maybe they felt more "trade" that day. I mean some days I'm David Bowie; some days I come off very shy, almost passive; and other days I look, act and feel like I might slam your butt on the pavement.

The 2004 BET *Celebration of Gospel* "Make Me Over" performance wasn't a performance at all, it was straight-up ministry...period. I was married and very focused with purpose that evening. Let's get this together, though: I was married before this "phase" of my career. The question almost suggested I got married for the look of this album. I had been married for four years at the point of *Out the Box*'s release. I just want to clear that up.

SWERV: Definitely understood. On* Oak Park 921'06 *and* The London Letters, *you've recorded songs that you knew risked being misunderstood as singing about loving another man—both were sung to you, sometimes using your birth name. Were those moments of rebellion or winks and nods to the gay community?

TON3X: There's nothing worse than spoon-feeding the listener. I let them decide what their hang-ups are and aren't. No, that wasn't the intention at

all concerning the song "Anthony" on *OP 921'06*. On the song "Coffee Shop Philosophies" it was, again, self-actualization. If the listener jumped the gun, then so be it. It's up to them anyway.

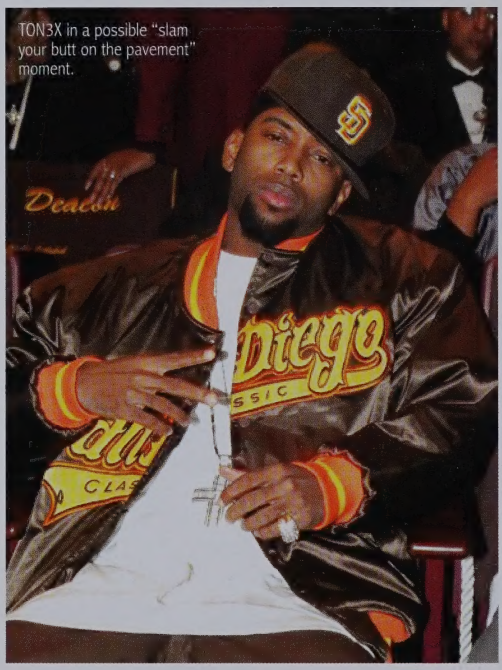
SWERV: What did being Grammy-nominated for "Bl3nd" mean to you and did you think you had a shot to win it?
TON3X: I was so happy that I got the nomination. It was like vindication. So many wanted that album [*Unspoken*] to fail; and from a commercial standpoint it did. *Unspoken* spoke loudest of all my previous work, though. It set me up for my future. Even my worst critics could not deny that it really was a good album. I really did think that I would win this one for some reason. I thought that the message of the song was so clear and the melody was particularly catchy. I had to remember that names that are familiar (or ring a bell to the voters) oftentimes get chosen over names [the voters] aren't familiar with no matter how good the actual product is. I was happy that India.Arie won because of how she was completely snubbed for seven awards her first time around. I was also happy that Maxwell got his first Grammy.

In my humble opinion I thought it was long overdue. I learned a lot about how things work. And I got to really talk at length with my musical hero and mentor James "Jimmy Jam" Harris III. After I spoke with him and Roberta Flack I was good.

SWERV: At this crossroads in your life, what does music mean to Ton3x now?
TON3X: I don't know what music really means anymore. I've recorded so much in a very short period of time that I haven't really been inspired to write or record anything. I mean, I thought that I certainly would have a lot to say after my mother died but ironically, nothing has really come to me. I know that Michael Jackson's death took a major toll on me. I'm still grieving his death. I felt like I lost my big brother. I can only imagine how Janet must feel about now.

I'm sure as I live a little more outside of the studio my purpose will come to me again. You know how there's Bed Bath & Beyond? I'm in Beyond.

SWERV: Throughout your catalog you both embrace and reject living old world religious doctrines and church protocols, resulting in a body of work that is honest, vulnerable and intriguing for some and confusing, bewildering and hypocritical for others. Is much of your work your artistic effort to share your human struggles and tensions in that song's particular moment, regardless of the consistency of your message?
TON3X: I personally would be cautious of anyone you've never heard cuss in the entire time you've known them. Yet I would be cautious of anyone who cusses all the time. I would be cautious of a person that never notices somebody that you both know looks hot. I would be equally as cautious of someone that undresses every mammal that walks in front of them. My message is no more confusing than the fodder I've been brainwashed with by the media, church and politics. It's the product of a very double-sided and confused society. I'm consistently inconsistent. There's some merit even in fear.


TON3X in a possible "slam your butt on the pavement" moment.

It takes courage to admit when you are afraid. Although God has not given us the spirit of fear, the wise men were "so afraid " when they saw the angel of the Lord. The Bible says, "Don't let your good be even spoken of." Yet Apostle Paul says, "When I want to do good, evil is always present." There's always a dichotomy when it comes to the human condition and coming to terms with our higher selves, the being that God intended for us to be. It's more about remembering who you really are than dwelling on the thing that you've currently become. We always return to our first love by design.

SWERV: Some Christians like to call you a heretic, but for those who've never heard your theological beliefs about how to have a relationship with God and reconciling sexuality with spirituality, will you briefly share them?
TON3X: Anyone that thinks for themselves inside the confines of any form of organized religion is considered rebellious. Anyone that vocalizes their alternative opinion or observation of a particular dogma out loud is considered a heretic. One thing *I am not* is an apostate. I have never abandoned my belief in Jesus Christ being the true and living Son of God. Nor have I ever denounced my Apostolic convictions concerning being baptized in Jesus' name and being filled with the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking in other tongues as the spirit of God gives utterance according to Acts 2:4 and Acts 2:38.

I think that's the problem. I'm not running away from my beliefs, I'm standing up for my rights as a human being who is God-fearing and willing to search out the fullness of who God is and not just take man's word for it. I mean, in early 1616 Galileo was considered a heretic by the church as well because he publicly stated an opposing belief from the church that the earth moved around the sun. Well, we all found out how that ended up: 400 years later [we learned] he was right. God revealed the truth to him and he was thrown in jail for revealing what God, through science, showed him.

SWERV: In the conservative church's move to isolate you, what wells of support do you draw from? What role have loyal fans and friends played in that?
TON3X: I wouldn't really know what loyal fans do as of late; I've shut down all of my social networks. Some friends of mine that happen to love my music sent me a tribute song letting me know

that they were praying for me. It was very thoughtful. I have a few friends. But I don't deal with people that can't deal with the real me. My velvet rope has gone up all around me. I found out very quickly how fair-weather folks can be. I'm just glad I found out who was really down for me good, bad and ugly before I get rich and famous again. Yes, I still plan to do what God gave me to do globally.

SWERV: With the recent deaths of your mother and father, and the relatively fresh homegoing of your second father, all famous preachers, do you still have a passion for pastoring your own church?
TON3X: No. I have a passion for film acting. I think that later in life I will be ready to fully commit to the demands of pastoring. Until then, I have great help in place to help me facilitate what's fallen into my lap. It's very easy from the sidelines to say what should and should not happen concerning a church, but it's crazy trying to deal with something you never asked for to begin with, while simultaneously trying to grieve. I've handled it very well so far, given my current circumstances. I do my best.

What's kept me going was a genuine love for God's people, particularly those who were black sheep in the family and church. I love pastoring, but I don't have a passion for the vocation. I have a passion for the heart of people and their true feelings.

SWERV: All that is said about living as an LGBT person can be said about a conservative church lifestyle: A person is socialized and conditioned to that identity by parents (often mothers); gets turned out into it by elders at an early age before they know themselves or their innate choice; is in a place for social rejects in need of community and support; are addicted to the highs, drama and passions of that alternative lifestyle. As a former "addict," will you backslide into conservatism?
TON3X: Backslide? There's always been an element of my career and ministry that's very conservative or else I'd have nothing to buck up against. Jesus kept close to the heart of Jewish customs, yet he refused to be religious for a mere display. [People say] "Is he gonna rep LGBT to the fullest and become our poster child?" "Is he gonna revert back to more conventional gospel surroundings by claiming he's been 'delivered'?" There's nothing to revert back to because I never moved from my theological contrasts. I'm one of the few that will admit that this whole dance is very confusing and scary to say the least, but I'm studying out loud to show myself approved by God, not man. I don't need validation from the church or a community. I need affirmation as a human being trying to find his way in a very fickle and judgmental western hemisphere suffering from cultural decay and identity crisis.

SWERV: Knowing the backslider's script the "saints" want to hear in order for the conservative church to reclaim you, how tempting is it to give them what they want and reap the rewards of being the new Donnie McClurkin?
TON3X: Ahhh, the irony. When you've been loved and then you get thrown out with the bath water, you do want that sense of belonging again. I've joked about it with a few close friends. I know exactly what to say or do to get back "in" with the church. It's really that simple and unfortunately very sad. After weighing it, I feel so good knowing that my conscience is clear. I know that I did the right thing by telling the truth, although I have yet to see other gospel artists asked the same blatant questions about their sexuality.

SWERV:* The New Yorker *has quoted you saying that Donnie McClurkin owes you an apology for including your name in his now infamous condemning outburst against homosexuality to a roomful of children and teens. Why do you think he included you, and what would an apology mean to you if Donnie continues his crusade to sow more seeds of uncertainty in the lives of teens struggling with their own histories of sexual abuse and their sexual identity?
TON3X: I just handed him a Grammy a few days ago. He gave me this big old bear hug like we were "boys." I gingerly tapped him on the back to be polite and professional, but I wasn't feeling him then and I'm *not* feeling him now. I don't respect disrespect. How phony can you be to throw me up under the bus at the C.O.G.I.C. Convocation and turn around and hug me like I'm your brother in Christ? You don't ever have to worry about me carrying on a legacy of self-hatred and personification of the very thing that I'm bashing someone else for. I know he must be in a weird place, but don't come for me because I know who I am in God and I know that God knows how everything is going to end and I trust God enough to be honest about where I am.

He still has yet to apologize for using my name to state his claims about gays in church. He called me confused and wounded. Um, *no*. He's confused and trying to deflect the bullets onto someone else to cover up his own sexual insecurities.

The Bible says work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. I've never had a beef with this man. He was in San Diego in September 2009 defending me and telling people to keep their mouth off of me (and I have the footage to prove it), yet in the next breath (because I'm a trending topic on Twitter) you put me out there like that? Be a man and come to me if you got a problem. I'm only addressing this issue publicly because I was bashed publicly and a fake hug ain't gonna fix it.

SWERV: As a survivor of sexual assault, you've been clear to make a distinction between same-sex desire as something independent from childhood sexual abuse, but even many gay male and female victims do draw a line connecting the two, despite logic and consistent scientific evidence that proves one isn't causal of the other. How do you counsel those abused young people whose process of self-discovery and self-determination has been interrupted by abuse?
TON3X: I think that a good God-fearing yet objective therapist would definitely be in order to make sure that the distinctions are sought out because each case is coherently different. Getting counsel from someone who is opposed to proven scientific evidence and data could be the main culprit in procreating arrested development in the psyches of young people who need spiritual yet practical understanding in such sensitive matters. It should never be about trying to make someone who's searching out their sexuality choose a definitive path; it's more about listening and understanding the core root of where the initial trauma began in the abuse and working through the layers of blockage and pus that have been built up over the years because of fear due to the excessive amount of prejudice in society and the church. So many are on a crusade for people to come out so young that they haven't taken time to notice that not everyone who experiments in a certain sexual behavior at a

Continued on page 29

does your mama know?

An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories

Edited By Lisa C. Moore

By turns funny, passionate, angry and joyous, does your mama know? *reflects the complexity of emotions that accompany a black lesbian's coming out. These short stories, poems, interviews and essays—fiction and nonfiction—make up a powerful collection of original and new writing.*

"These voices [in *does your mama know?*] *are varied as are the tales they tell. Haitian, Jamerican, Afro-Canadian, biracial, Southern U.S., London by way of Barbados. Ages 14 to 90. ...It is extremely rare to see a book of any kind that reflects the diversity of black people in North America."*
—R. Erica Doyle,
Women in the Life *magazine*

"Few such voices have been raised to sing the history of African-American lesbians. Editor Lisa C. Moore noticed that and has set about to correct the omission, and she has done a masterful job of it."
—Dale Edwyna Smith,
Lesbian Review of Books

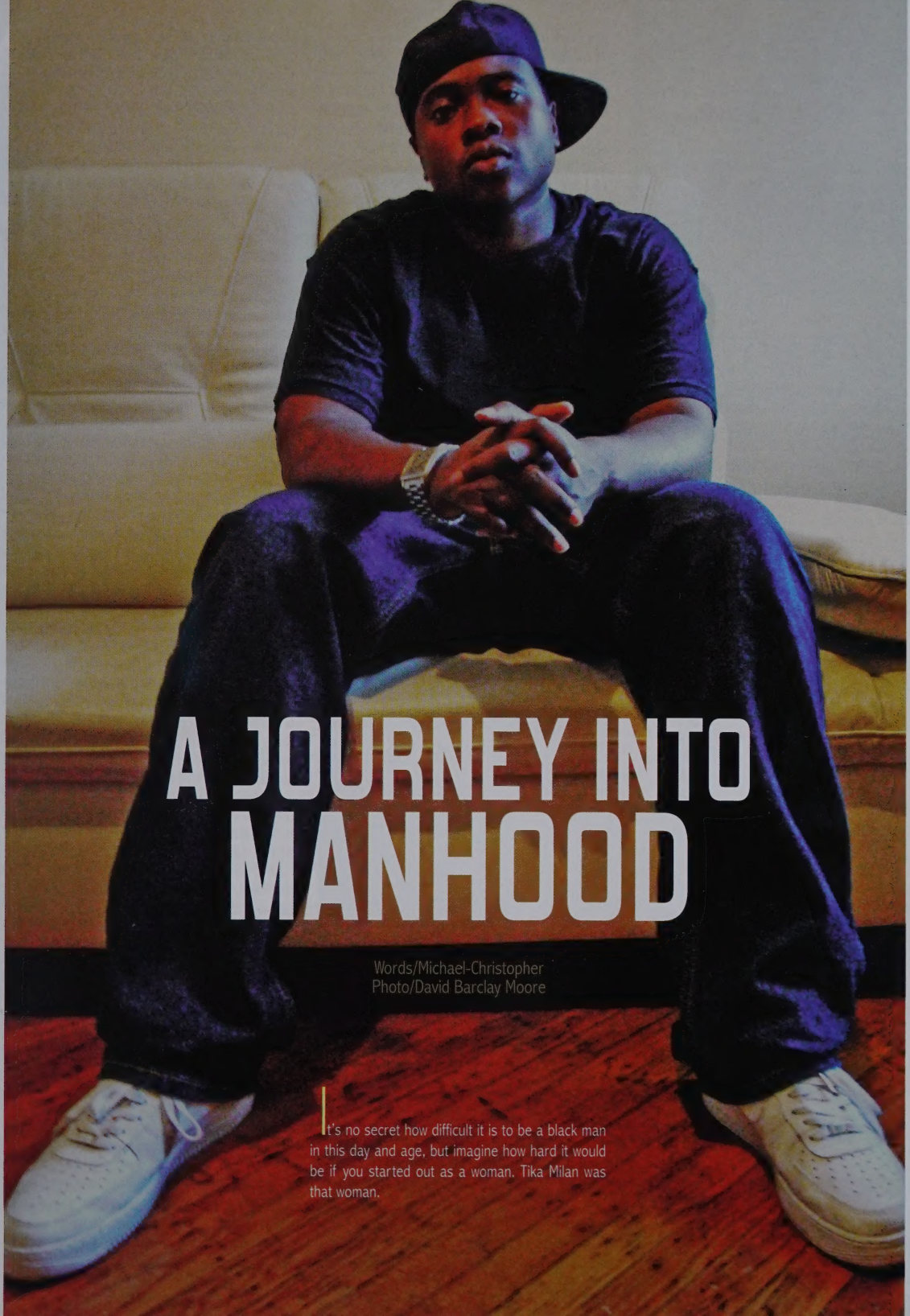
EXPANDED 2ND EDITION

WITH 17 NEW STORIES, NOW AVAILABLE!

does your mama know?
An Anthology of Black Lesbian
Coming Out Stories
Edited by Lisa C. Moore
Cover art © 1997 by Kamela Eaton
$19.95 paperback
RedBone Press
ISBN- 10 0-9786251-6-1
ISBN-13 978-0-9786251-6-0

REDBONE PRESS

Visit www.redbonepress.com or Contact: RedBone Press
P.O. Box 15571 / Washington, DC 20003 p: 202-667-0392 / f: 301-588-0588



A JOURNEY INTO MANHOOD

Words/Michael-Christopher
Photo/David Barclay Moore

It's no secret how difficult it is to be a black man in this day and age, but imagine how hard it would be if you started out as a woman. Tika Milan was that woman.

Milan, born and raised female in Buffalo, N.Y., grew up a tomboy. He often womdered, "why am I not a boy?" and felt his female body didn't match the maleness he felt inside. Milan lived in a black neighborhood, but attended a mostly white, all-girls private school where he was forced to wear the required skirt or dress. "It was rough," he recalls, "but I guess I got cute." Temporarily, Milan enjoyed some of the activities many young girls love, like runway modeling, and for a moment enjoyed the attention. "People started liking me," he says. "I was doing all these feminine things. It was what I had to do."

Although Milan realized he was lesbian by 15, he attempted to date boys to further conform to his rigidly heterosexual environment. "I tried to sleep with boys. I tried it twice. All my friends were doing it, so I said, 'Well, let me see what this was all about' and I hated it, hated it, *hated it*!" He thought maybe it was just the wrong guy, so Milan chose another male partner. That's when he realized that the problem was within. Despite his brush as a heterosexual female, none of it felt right. As soon as high school was done, Milan gave up skirts, threw on boy drag and begun his evolution.

In 2003, Milan set off for New York City to attend City College for a master's degree in poetry to complement his English degree from University of Buffalo. It was during these years that Milan became entrenched in New York City's black gay and lesbian community. In '06, while working as a bartender, Milan met Nicki. At the time she was coming out and Milan was the first female she ever dated. That same year, Milan appeared on MTV's *I'm From Rolling Stone*, a reality contest show in which six contestants competed for a spot working at the famed music magazine. The director wanted the couple to come out on the show, but Milan, protective of Nicki's newness to the life, wasn't having it. "I wasn't there for them to chronicle my personal life," he says. The director later asked if Milan was transgender. Milan knew he was, but hadn't yet started the physical steps. "[The director] was really trying to get me to come out. He would turn the cameras off, come to me and say, 'I really need you to expound on your gender identity.' I wouldn't do it. I didn't want it to be exploited."

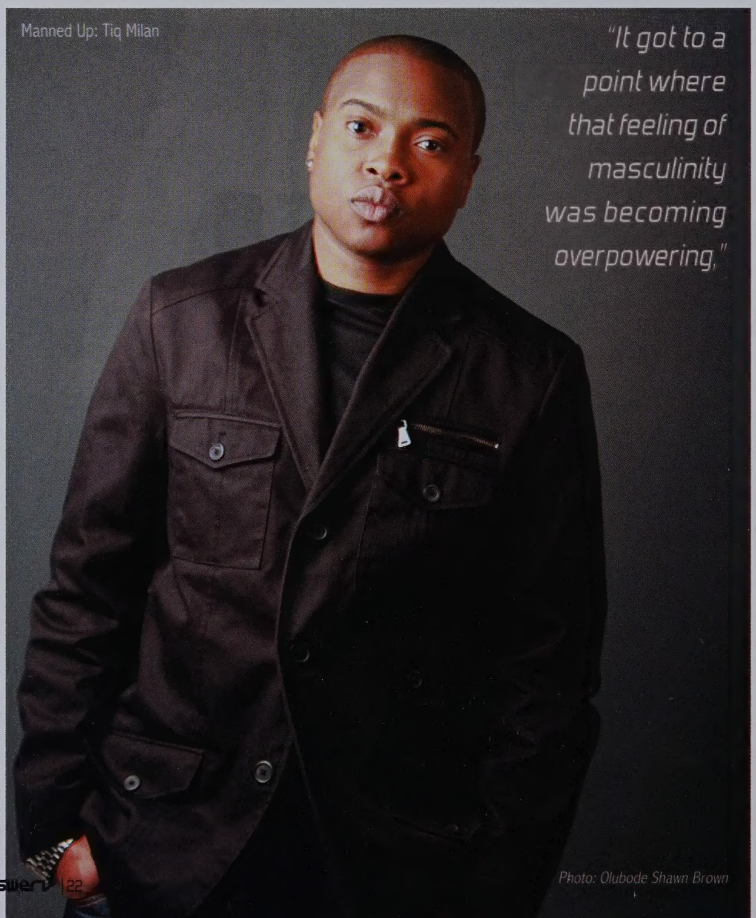
Milan started out strong on the show, but ultimately did not get the position. Regardless, Milan has written for the likes of Vibe.com, AllHipHop.com, NewsOne.com and BallerStatus.com. And, at 5'11" and with all the swagger of a Bronx B-boy, Milan has been passing for a man for years.

Milan recently contributed a chapter to an upcoming anthology on hip hop and feminism, approaching hip hop from a female perspective then later as a man. His unique viewpoint notwithstanding, Milan has become frustrated with the coverage of hip hop as of late. "Hip-hop journalism used to be the shit; now it's wack," he proclaims. "The writers aren't honest with themselves, [nor] honest with the fact that the music sucks." He feels journalistic integrity is lacking and as a lover of the art and part of the hip hop community, hip hop writers should be able to give more clear critiques. "Just because you hear that shit eight times a day doesn't mean it's good," he contends. Apparently, no one else has been man enough to say it.

Later on that year, Milan went back in front of the camera appearing in Hanifah Walidah's "accidental" documentary *U People*, in which many of the thirty women involved in filming the "Make a Move" music video were caught on camera discussing the ins and outs of sexuality and gender politics. One of Milan's shining moments was when he (then still a she) spoke on trans issues and the possibility of a trans man losing the lesbian community because of gender reassignment. "If [I was a] trans-identified person…identifying with [my] masculinity," Milan pondered," does that mean that I have to lose my female community? If I was to take these steps, am I going to lose all of you?"

Some lesbians assume that once a female transitions, they become straight and want to socialize within the straight community. Milan says that's farthest from the truth. "All I know is the gay community. I like the fags, I like the dykes, that's my life," he says. Some even assume there is a level of misogyny involved, thinking that being a butch woman was not enough, therefore it must mean he hated being a woman. Milan makes it clear that he loves women, but did not love *being* one. "It got to a point where that feeling of masculinity was becoming overpowering," he says. That realization is what drove Milan to start his transition from female to male.

Milan's transition wasn't an easy road since he hadn't been completely forthcoming with his decision to become male. "I told my three sisters and I told a cousin, my niece and nephew," he admits, "but I haven't told my parents yet, which is kind of a big step for me. They think I just go to the gym a lot." While researching gender reassignment, Milan had conversations


Manned Up: Tiq Milan
"It got to a point where that feeling of masculinity was becoming overpowering,"
Photo: Olubode Shawn Brown

with other trans men that seemed to find their way to the same topic: Acceptance. Deciding to be one's self can come with a price. Milan's parent's supported him when he came out as a lesbian in high school, but gender reassignment "is a whole other ballgame," he says.

Two years later in 2008, Milan participated in director David Barclay Moore's documentary *Realness*, part of Black Public Media's "The Masculinity Project." Alongside him was Nicki, now more out and more comfortable with loving women, but in a relationship with one in the midst of transitioning to male. Milan had been taking hormone injections for nearly a year, which led to a deeper voice, facial and body hair, hot flashes due to menopause and weight gain due to water retention,

Milan purposely took things slow by taking half doses, mindful of the changes to come and how it might affect the people in his life. Nicki actually helps administer the hormone shots in the film, but appears mournful of the sensitive, patient woman she's helping do away with. Nicki also speaks of how they used to play and wrestle, but now she is no match. She also notes that Milan has the tendency to snap at her, but realizes its just the testosterone, or "T" as they call it. "People think men are just assholes or just not as emotional. It really is a biological thing," she says. Ultimately, Nicki no longer saw the woman with whom she fell in love and the two broke up.

Today, Milan is in a better place. His body is getting more acclimated to the hormones; the hot flashes have stopped, he's dropped the water weight, and works out at the gym, becoming more muscular. Milan has also gotten the gender changed on his driver's license and is in the process of getting his name legally changed. Although "Tika," a portion of his birth name, rings feminine to some, Milan has decided not to deviate too far from the name his father gave him. "He is a very special part of my life," he explains. "It's the name my daddy gave me and I'm sticking with it." Milan goes by "Tiq" for short.

Finding a comfortable place to work as a trans person often means working within the LGBT community. Milan was working at Lambda Legal, an LGBT legal resource organization, as a media coordinator. He now works as a youth coordinator at the Bronx Community Pride Center, the only LGBT organization in the Bronx. The Center offers a safe space, direct health and educational services as well as case management and social networking for all ages.

Now that he's single, dating as a trans man brings new challenges that Milan didn't have to deal with being a butch lesbian. Milan is likely to get some harsh looks walking into a lesbian club in his current state of manhood. "Even when I explain what's the deal, I can still get treated harshly," he says. And trying to date straight women can be even more complex. "It can be very lonely being a trans dude," Milan says. "Dating straight women can be an issue. You start dealing with a straight girl and she thinks you're a guy, then you have to have this whole conversation and that could turn ugly. There is a small enclave of women who like very hard butch women or strictly F to M. It's a very small population but they're there."

On the other end of the spectrum, gay men have started hitting on Milan—hard. It doesn't help that he enjoys "hanging out with the boys" at Chi Chiz, one of New York's last black gay bars, where he has to practically beat them off with a stick. "The boys are after me, yo!" Milan exclaims. "I'll tell them I'm a trans guy and they still want me. They don't care. [I tell them] 'What exactly do you think I'm going to do with you?'"

Milan is also working on an op ed piece about the phenomenon he calls "tranny fags": "You have a lot of trans men on hormones that used to be butch lesbians that are now gay trans men who now date gay men or other trans men." Milan says these men never dated or felt an attraction to men previously, but the hormone can cause the uncharacteristic behavior. "One of my best friends—we go back to the press and curl days, okay? Way back. Chasing girls together, butch together. He transitioned; I transitioned. This nigga calls me and is like, 'Yo, I got a boyfriend.'" Milan has managed to return to the dating scene and, thankfully, things are going just the way he wants.

All that's left is for Milan to get a hysterectomy and double mastectomy, which he plans to do in the next couple of years, and all remnants of the old Tika will be gone.

"Its almost like dealing with the death of a person," Milan admits. "She's gone. Now Tiq's here."

FUNNY LADY

Words/Lisa Joyner

Photo: Saidia McLaughlin

As snow clouds began to deliver their lush flakes over Washington, D.C. recently, I settled down to what I thought would be a hilarious, stomach-holding interview with comedian Karen Williams. Having experienced Williams do stand-up comedy at a recent Women of Color & Friends Weekend in Provincetown and attended her workshop, Humor and Writing, at Fire & Ink III: Cotillion in October 2009 in Austin, Texas, I knew I was in for a treat. Surprisingly, the part of Williams that emerged during our interview was very introspective and attractively intelligent.

Who is Karen Williams? Most who have been "in the life" for a good period of time should be familiar with her work. If not, I can only suspect that you have been living under a heterosexual rock. She is one of the few successful, out, black lesbian comedians. She has been in the business of comedy for 26 years and has traveled the world telling our stories.

SWERV: Did you know as a child that you wanted to be a comedian?
Karen Williams: Absolutely not. I didn't know anything about being a comedian as a child. This was something that came out of my lifetime. I started doing comedy when I was 30. I had lots of other careers prior to becoming a comic.

SWERV: What made you choose comedy?
KW: It's a combination of influences. I think all my life I had been looking for that divine combination of art and science. Being able to express and articulate ideas was very important to me. Once I was exposed to feminism and all of that, it just seemed like there were other voices that needed to be heard. There was an atmosphere in the Bay Area of openness; so many lesbian and gay comics came out of San Francisco in the early '80s.

SWERV: Could you explain what you mean when you say "art and science"? I don't think I've ever heard of comedy being referred to as that.
KW: As an art?

SWERV: Yes.
KW: I just think that there is an art of expression and comedy does it for me in that way. I get to really look at life using right brain and left brain.

SWERV: Have you always been this funny person?
KW: I don't think so. I wasn't the class clown type. Although friends have told me that I've always been funny, I don't think of myself that way. Most people that get to know me are surprised at how serious I am, but that's typical of most comics. We tend to be very observational. I think it's people [who] say things that are really funny, and [there's] the truth with which we say things—that's funny.

SWERV: How long did it take you to build such confidence?
KW: A long time. I remember the first time I did it. I'm telling you, I did five minutes of somebody's act, and I told my friend it felt like every drug I had ever taken was fighting in my head.

SWERV: Wow!
KW: (My) stomach was lurching. I had dressed up. My friend had braided my hair. I looked like a queen standing up in the middle of this dive club in Oakland that most people would remember, the Hegenberger Inn. I did my five minutes, people laughed, and it was really good for me.

SWERV: When you began doing comedy, were you doing it in gay settings?
KW: Well, there are several circuits; I think the newest is the LGBTQ circuit. I started out in clubs. I entered comedy competitions with the likes of Mark Curry. I decided because of the women's gigs I was getting …in the women's world, feminist world…I decided that I was going to do more stuff for women. That was a little more important to me because at the time I could tell the butt of the joke was the gay guy or girl in the audience and I knew who the people were and I really didn't think that was fun for me.

I felt really fortunate [that] right across the Bay comics were gathering and doing other types of material actually talking about our lives, rather than being the butt of the joke. We were learning how to embrace ourselves; laugh about most parts of our lives that were unique to us. There is a certain inspiration in that. That's what comedy has been for me: you, the microphone, the audience and your truth. That's why I have always loved comedy, because

you get to tell your truth. If in the telling, other people identify, then all the better.

I feel excited that me, Kate Clinton and Suzanne Westenhoefer created a genre of humor that now we call lesbian humor, but it did not exist before we did. There is something very powerful about that. There is something very powerful that for almost twenty years I was the only out black lesbian comic on the circuit.

SWERV: I'm sure. Even now, I don't see many black [gay] comics.
KW: There aren't that many. That's why you don't see them. I started with one comedian who's black and she didn't want to be typecast on that circuit so she went over to do some other things, wound up coming back and now she's left again. It depends on what people are looking for; [and] depending on how out you're willing to be. I tell people I'm so out I can't go back in. And I think a lot of people just aren't reconciled with being that out.

SWERV: I often wonder what it will take for things to change.
KW: I think that things have really changed! To be honest, we are a minority of people doing [comedy]. You see a few on TV, and it gives people the idea that there are tons and tons of comics, but the truth of the matter is there really aren't. You just get to see them all on Comedy Central.

SWERV: You often mention drugs in your act.
KW: Drugs?

SWERV: Drugs. Was that a '70s phase or was that something that you had to overcome?
KW: I mention drugs mostly because of my generation. I know there could not have been an LGBT revolution and I'm equally convinced that there could not have been a sexual revolution without drugs.

SWERV: You don't think so?
KW: People are not naturally that uninhibited. So, without that… We can assign morality to certain things that may or may not be moralistic. I've been a Buddhist for almost forty years, and I really believe that cause and effect is at the essence of everything. A lot of people found out about themselves during that drug culture time. A lot of people didn't make it, granted, but a lot of people that did learned a lot about themselves and…how to interact with people that were not like you. [It was] certainly on the tail of the movement toward "make love, not war" and sexual freedom. They all go hand and hand. I don't think we would be where we are today as people if any one of those movements had not been there.

I think people are just naturally modest. Especially based on where our parents are coming from sexually; [they were] as underground as people could be. People talked about oral sex like it was disgusting. Most women were raised to be virgins for a man. Then all the jokes about how bad women smell and this and that. The idea of two women licking on each other bordered on making people feel disgusted. [But] there are a whole bunch of us that can't wait to do that.

So what happened to those people? They needed things to free us up. They needed the drugs until we could learn how not to be dependent on that, and we needed to be able to free ourselves up culturally to be able to be more expansive about sexual expression and all that stuff.

SWERV: OK.
KW: So I talk about drugs, you know, I'm making a jokey joke. I'm letting people know, "Hey, I've been there; I know what it's about." I'm a survivor. There is no shame in my game about it. I'm glad I had the opportunity to find out about people and extend beyond myself, because I was basically a very shy person. A lot of comics, we're trained extroverts. We really are introverted people, but we've trained.

SWERV: Thank you for that answer. You mentioned that you teach classes?
KW: I've taught at Cleveland State University. I've taught at the only school credit stand-up comedy club in the country. I was still working on my master's degree so that upset some of the Ph.D. folk at the college.

SWERV: At Cleveland State?
KW: Cleveland State University. I'm grateful for the opportunity. It was a great class. There was a comedy club on campus. They opened it up so that my class met twice a week, Tuesdays and Thursdays; then Friday nights we had open mic night. Comics came from all over Ohio. It was a great.

SWERV: Since we're discussing institutions, tell me about your HaHA Institute.
KW: HaHA Institute is the International Institute of Humor and Healing Arts. The web site is www.hahainstitute.com. I do humor-related workshops dealing with stress management in the workplace, humor healing, which I developed from working in the HIV/AIDS community across the nation in the '80s and early '90s. Then I moved more into corporate and nonprofit with humor stress management in the workplace. I do humor diversity work. It gives me an adjunct activity to the performing of comedy. So many times if someone wants me to perform comedy on, say, a Saturday night, I can go in and do a workshop on Friday or Saturday morning and then I do in-services for companies. It's just turned out to be another more scholarly-based work that I enjoy.

SWERV: How did you come up with that?
KW: In 1988 I was asked to perform comedy in Las Vegas, and when I was going there the producer asked if I could also do a workshop. At that time I wasn't doing workshops, but I told him yes. I've had a lot of improvisational comedy and theatre training, so I put together a rudimentary workshop. A guy came to the workshop whose partner had died three days before, and he said he thought he'd never laugh again. He came, and he laughed. I knew I was onto something.

SWERV: You've been doing comedy about twenty-five years now. Are you still as passionate as you were in the very beginning?
KW: It's my longest relationship. It's something I love and, yeah, I'm very passionate about it. I made the mistake of telling a woman once that comedy was my girlfriend.

SWERV: Who inspires you?
KW: My parents are very inspirational—still open and growing and honest. There was a time when Erykah Badu encouraged me. Now Beyoncé encourages me. The President encourages me, Michelle and those two little kids. I mean, I'm one of those people who wakes up every morning, honestly, earnestly ecstatic that I woke up.

That I have another day to live this life makes me tremendously happy to be alive. I know that might sound a certain corny, but I know how precarious life is and that there are really no guarantees and, wow, it's a magnificent thing called life. I really find that sometimes I suffer a great deal because of my sensitivity and all of that observational stuff. A lot of times I don't like being human. It's so hard to be human, to be a good human being. Today I just feel like, wow, it just doesn't get any better than this. You know what I mean?

THE WAY I SEE IT

Words/Rob Smith

RACE & DATING 101

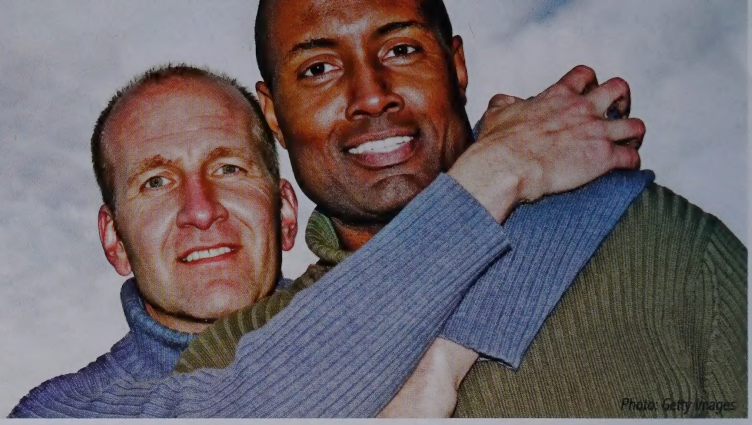


Photo: Getty Images

Snow Queen—A gay man of color who dates white men exclusively.

I was a 19-year-old Snow Queen. It's true. When I was 19 years old, I went through a phase when I only dated white men. I know, I know. I mean, how self-hating could I have been, right? Having been fed a steady diet of the white-male-as-impeccable-sex-object brainwashing (and bad writing and so-so acting) that was Showtime's *Queer as Folk* for a year, I was pretty much convinced that white guys were the epitome of desirability, so naturally the only way to be desired was to be with one. Remember, kids, the gay culture of 2001 was even more starved for material than we are now. Noah and his arc weren't around to show me how fabulously sexy, witty and successful black gay men can be, so this then-19-year-old baby gay got his first ideas about gay culture from *QAF*'s cast of five white circuit queens who bounced from party to party and date to date in pretty much exclusively white circles. To their credit, there may have been a black extra. Once.

Nine long months and a few loser boyfriends later I gave up on that, finally attempting to break free of the messages the Gay Media was trying to force down my throat. I decided that *this* black homosexual will date all colors of the rainbow. It wasn't until years later that fate intervened to bring into my life a sweet, funny, handsome man I met my first summer in New York City. The fact that this guy was white was at this point (thankfully) secondary or even tertiary to me, as my own personal lines in the sand when it comes to dating, right or wrong, are more physical than anything else (I like a nice body; so shoot me). Since then, there have been a few other men I've dated who break down as pretty much 50/50 black and Latino, though my United Nations policy when it comes to dating still stands.

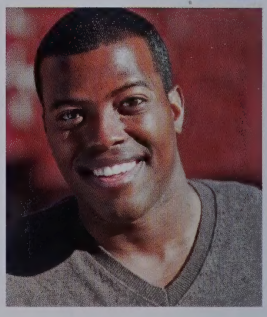
However, when talking to certain friends and acquaintances, I receive the intel that I "don't date black men," or that I'm somehow putting off vibes that "black men need not apply," which never ceases to throw me off every time I hear it. Initially, I was angry about it, but I started thinking about it a bit more. When I find myself dating a black man, or any man of color in general, one of the things I like is the message it sends out when we walk down the street. It says that we are beautiful, we are powerful, we are *together* when either of us could obviously make the decision to "branch out," if you will. When I walked down the street while dating a white guy, I couldn't help but factor in the message that *that* was sending out as well, knowing that externally people would see just another tired black queen chasing after a white guy when in fact I'd gone through that phase long ago and was just enjoying the company of a really nice guy. Honestly, who can begrudge that?

It turns out some people can, and you know what? That's OK. I realize that black gays are so used to being devalued and ignored in our dual communities that we're hypersensitive to feelings of abandonment by our own, but it also saddens me that some of our minds are still so closed off to the idea of dating other races, and that we project our own biases and judgments onto interracial couples. Unfortunately, I can't even pretend to be above it. There are gay men of color that I look up to in various realms, and my reaction to finding out some of them were partnered with white guys was an involuntary one of disappointment and rejection mixed with a little sadness. I recently read somewhere that black men loving each other was a revolutionary act, and it saddened me that these men, who are such groundbreaking artists and activists in their professional lives, chose to go the less revolutionary route in their love lives.

Of course, when I make that judgment on them, I become exactly what it is I'm trying to avoid; i.e. *that* guy who continues to give the side-eye to the relationships of others while writing different rules for himself. So when I date a white guy, it's because he's this awesome person who happens to be white, but when another black guy does it's because he's a snow queen? I can't really let myself off the hook on that one. It's not fair when it happens to me, and it's not fair to dish it out to other men who happen to be in love with melanin-deficient gays who love them back.

So where does that leave me? Still trying to negotiate the minefield of gay dating while attempting to sidestep the added trip wires of race, and not be so judgmental about my potential dating prospects or the people with which others have found happiness. I'm far from "post-racial," and I'm not going to tell you to "see beyond color," because those of us at least attempting to be intellectually honest with ourselves when it comes to race know that both of those things are absolute garbage. I will say that over the years, race is tumbling down in importance in my list of qualifiers. What all of the men I date seem to have had in common is that they're nice, genuine, hardworking, decent men. What I'm finding out is that this make and model comes in many different colors. Lucky for me.

Rob Smith is a freelance writer located in New York City. His work has appeared in USA Today, The Huffington Post, *and* AfterElton.com. *He is currently working on a memoir detailing his tenure as a gay soldier in the U.S. Army. He can be reached at robsmithvet@gmail.com and twitter.com/robsmithonline.*



All hail the queen: Mercedes Black receiving her crown in 2009.

A CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

Words/Jamil Fletcher

Gowns will flow and tears will fall while sashes are draped and tiaras fitted. Glamour will be in high gear as the Black America Pageantry System crowns Mr. & Miss Black America and Miss Black America Plus for 2010 in Atlanta on March 12-14. The mother of all pageants in the black gay community celebrates a longstanding history of royal excellence through intellect, style and talent.

The Black America Pageantry System (BAPS), also referred to as MBA (Miss Black America), prides itself on being the first national pageant offered to black female impersonators and male lead entertainers. The mission of BAPS is to build awareness and pride in the diversity of the black lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community as well as to create a source to offer black entertainers an avenue to compete on a national platform.

I had a chance to speak with Bennie Mosley, chief executive officer of BAPS, about this historic pageant and the upcoming event.

SWERV: How did the pageant get started?

Bennie Mosley: Black America was created in 1979 in the mind of Miss Erica Terrell, who had the dream to provide a stage for black female impersonators to compete and represent the black gay community as a symbol of excellence. Contrary to beliefs, it was not created because of discrimination from mainstream pageantry systems; it was created as a form of empowerment with hopes to foster pride and create excellence within our own black gay communities.

SWERV: What makes this pageant different from others around the country?

BM: What makes MBA unique would be our total commitment to excellence. We are more than just a pageant. We are activists, promoting safe sex and awareness in our communities. We are ambassadors, representing a community beyond our local communities. We are educators, teaching a new generation of entertainers about excellence. We are investors, giving back to our community through scholarship funding. And we are mentors, training entertainers and promoters on the business of pageantry.

SWERV: What does it take to win this competition?

BM: One must not only prepare to compete in the judged categories (interview, presentation, sportswear, formal wear, talent); you must also possess a passion to create a better community.

SWERV: Tell me about some of your favorite individuals who have worn this title.

BM: I have to honestly say that each and every one of the former titleholders has impacted my life in some way. Pressed to choose, I would have to say that R'Darius Black, Tommie Ross, Niesha

continued on next page

Dupree, Natasha Braxton and Tamara Chevalier have shown a commitment that makes them stand out in my eyes.

SWERV: What changes have you seen within the black transgender community over the years in hosting the pageant?
BM: Wow, that's a great question. I have seen individuals become more socially responsible. I believe under my leadership, the girls now know that the day of just being fashionable or pretty will not allow you to wear this crown. I think the biggest compliment I have received over the years has been to hear entertainers tell me, "I'm not ready to become Mr./Miss Black America... I have to get my life together first." I used to be offended by that statement and then it dawned on me one day: I have done my job.

SWERV: Describe some of the most memorable moments of the pageant over the years.
BM: To be honest there are really too many for me to list. Each year brings so much more excitement. If I had to choose one it would have been ten years ago when I was the pageant coordinator during the Miss Black America Plus pageant. It was the first and only time in Black Plus pageant history that 20 entertainers entered and competed for any title. What made that day so memorable was not only the number of contestants, but the quality. That pageant lineup included the *top* plus-size entertainers in the country. I was honored.

SWERV: What does the future hold for the Pageant?
BM: Ultimately, I would love to gain a major corporate sponsor who would invest in the art form. I would like to become incorporated and provide the girls with jobs and benefits. There is so much talent among the formers of Miss Black America. We have hair stylists, make-up artists, fashion designers and impersonators who have graced shows such as *America's Got Talent, RuPaul's Drag Race, Real Housewives of Atlanta, The Mo'Nique Show* and *Project Runway*.

Photos courtesy of Bennie Mosley

Kyle Ean: Mr. Black America 2009

Go to www.mbapageants.com for more information on this year's schedule of pageants leading up to the Atlanta final competition.

Continued from page 19

young age can be absolutely assumed to fall in a certain lane of preference. Then you have young people that do know what they feel and need to know that it's not necessary to act out physically on any sexual feelings until they have been well informed of the dangers [of unprotected sex] and given the choice of abstinence as an alternative before opening that box.

SWERV: You've made a point of not speaking about your dating life since your divorce. Do you see yourself ever giving the same kind of spotlight and public affirmation to your next relationship as you gave to your marriage, or was that a lesson learned?
TON3X: Lesson learned.

SWERV: If people have three careers in their lifetime, what is your next career? What is your calling now?
TON3X: To be a recording activist and to be a better uncle to my nieces and nephews.

SWERV: What would it mean to you if your talent and body of work were only celebrated and received posthumously?
TON3X: I don't plan on dying. My work and talent will be realized and affirmed this decade.

SWERV: Despite all the costs, has living your truth been worth it?
TON3X: Looking back, I think I would have waited until I was financially autonomous before I spoke out so quickly, but I was asked a blatant question and I gave an honest answer. Hey, it got me here, right? It served a purpose. Now I know who really loves me and who doesn't before my paramountcy in mainstream takes flight.

SWERV: Out of all the lessons and sayings your parents poured into you, what sustains you in the midst of this storm?
TON3X: My dad used to say, "Trouble don't last always." And my mom used to say, "There's got to be a bend in the road somewhere up ahead."

FOXXJAZELL

Boy, Girl, Whateva

Look out, there's a fierce girl—boy—*whatever*—on the block. Foxxjazell, the first transgender rapper approaching mainstream, is about to take the world by storm. If you haven't heard of her, it's not because she's a newbie; you're just not paying attention. Let's catch up: In 2007, Foxxjazell appeared on *The Tyra Banks Show* alongside rappers Tori Fixx and Deadlee discussing the emerging LGBT hip-hop community and homophobia in hip hop. Foxxjazell's first CD *Introducing...Foxxjazell*, released in 2008, featured the singles "Feel the Vibe" and "Priority." Foxxjazell has also been featured in *Hip Hop Weekly* and *XXL* magazines.

Most notably, Foxxjazell is known for her alleged sexual relations with rapper Chingy. Chingy has vehemently denied the allegations that he was at the receiving end of Foxxjazell's remaining male anatomy. His denial spurred Foxxjazell's diss record, "Bottom Baby," last year.

This year, Foxxjazell dropped her second CD, *Boy, Girl, Whateva*, featuring the single and video "Split Enz," currently playing on VH1.com. The clip looks like a David LaChapelle photograph come to life complete with bright colors, heroin chic-posed models, and some light bondage to top it all off. Meanwhile, Foxxjazell raps over the heavy synth beat, "so like a bad hairdo / I'm done with you until I find a new / you're just like split ends / gotta get you off my head."

"I Fall" is a strong, inspirational cut speaking of inner strength and self-esteem; something transgender folks need plenty of just to get by day-to-day. The CD is full of themes never heard on disc before and Foxx doesn't hide the fact that she was born male. She is what she is and if you don't like it, then pump.

"All of U," a sweet love song rivaling LL Cool J's best romance raps, sings a song of love, doubt and break-up from a trans perspective. Foxx and her dude enjoy blissful enduring love until he decides it's time he gets married to a biological woman and has some kids to appease his family. Of course Foxx doesn't take this lying down; the chorus takes a less than loving turn from, "I want to chill / chill with you," to "I wanna hate / hate you / I wanna stab / stab you..." and on from there. Someone's car windows are going to get busted out.

Another single-worthy track is the upbeat, bubbly "Hookup," a true story, dedicated to those who have been kissed and dismissed. The track, co-penned by Ashley Breathe, also on vocals, speaks of an unrequited encounter and the emotions thereafter as only Foxx can relay them

To wrap things up, Foxxjazell takes it to the ballroom on "F.I.S.H.Y," a rousing cut urging house queens everywhere to prance up and down the runaway in full battle mode.

The production on *Boy, Girl, Whateva* is strong and the songs have solid melody and hooks. As far as her flow, Foxx admits on her web site, "I don't aim to be the best or greatest rapper. I aim to be the voice for my people 'cause our voice is nonexistent in the hip-hop community." That is, nonexistent until now.—*MC*

April 2-3, 2010
Austin Relay Pride Celebration
Contact: Rodgerick Bradley / 512-929-0322
E-mail: austinrelaypride@gmail.com
www.austinrelaypride.com

April 18-25, 2010
Philadelphia Black Gay Pride
Contact: Chris Alston, P.O. Box 40926, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: 877-497-PBGP; e-mail: phillyblackpride@gmail.com
www.phillyblackpride.org

April 26-May 2, 2010
Equality Forum: The Global GLBT Summit in Philadelphia
This weeklong event has an international focus, top-tier panel discussions, parties, an annual art exhibit, International Equality Dinner, Sunday OUT! and more.
www.equalityforum.com

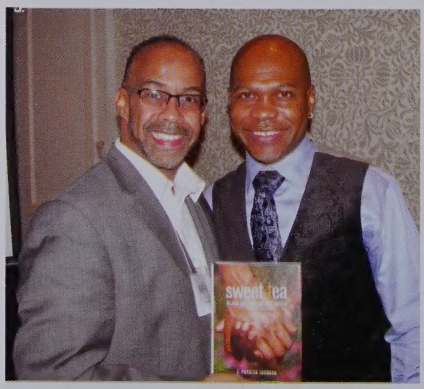
May 1, 2010
Brown Sugah Bash Arts Explosion Presents:
A Night of Comedy with Karen Williams
Have a laugh with comedian Karen Williams in Washington, DC. Tickets are $25 in advance via Paypal or through local BSB representatives, $35 at the door. For more information, follow us on Facebook at Brown Sugah Bash Arts Explosion or call 703-755-0767 or e-mail BrownSugahBash1@gmail.com.

May 7-10, 2010
Blatino Oasis
Blatino Oasis is a desert retreat vacation designed for men of color who enjoy the company of (gay/bi) men. The weekend will include parties and social gatherings, and the annual Black Erotica Awards.
http://www.clubrimshot.com/Blatino_Oasis.html

May 21-23, 2010
Words to Live By: 2010 and Beyond Writers Retreat
The Oaks/New Dawn Foundation, New Rochelle, NY
Join Vintage Entity Press for a weekend of workshops, networking, open mic, readings, book selling, and community. Invited presenters: G. Winston James, Cheryl Boyce-Taylor, Pamela Sneed, Curu Necos-Bloice, Herukhuti, Steven G. Fullwood, April Silver, Lamar Ariel, Lenelle Moïse, Anton Nimblett, Ellery Washington and more! For more information, go to http://www.vepress.com or contact Herukhuti, Associate Editor-at-Large, at heru@vepress.com or 917-403-0536. theoaksndf.org; www.vepress.com

May 27-30, 2010
Washington, DC Black Pride
Contact: Earl Fowlkes, Black Lesbian & Gay Pride Day, Inc.
P.O. Box 77071, Washington, DC 20013-3071, Phone: 202-347-0555
E-mail: contactus@dcblackpride.org; www.dcblackpride.org

ON THE SCENE



Black Gay Research Group (BGRG) held its 2010 Black Gay Research Summit on January 20. The Summit is the flagship gathering of scholars in the humanities, health sciences and social sciences, coming together from all over the world to engage in intellectual exchanges about the lives of black gay men.

1. (l-r) Mitchell Wharton, Daniel Driffin, Kraig Pannell, Dr. Sheldon D. Fields, Dr. Ed Brockenbrough, Orlando Harris. 2. (l-r) Dr. Leo Wilton; Ernest Hopkins; Dr. Ron Simmons; Kenneth Jones; Roosevelt Mosby, Jr.; Dr. LaRon Nelson. 3. Dr. Sheldon D. Fields, left, and Dr. E. Patrick Johnson, author of Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South.

Tell us about your event! E-mail us at info@swervmag.com.

Photos courtesy of BGRG

2010 Pride Schedule

Austin, TX	April 2-3,2010
Philadelphia, PA	April 18-25, 2010
Washington, DC	May 27 - 30, 2010
Albany, NY	June 4-6,2010
Newark,NJ	June 8 - 14, 2010
Boston, MA	June 10-13, 2010
New Orleans, LA	June 10-13, 2010
Portland, OR	June 11-15,2010
Memphis, TN	June 19-21, 2010
Orlando	June 4 - 6,2010
Columbia, SC	June 19 - 21, 2010
London, UK	June 24, 2010

Building Community Through Pride

Check out the website for the news, culture and complete listing of prides in over 30 cities !

http://www.Ifbprides.com

By starting HIV treatment, I went from being in denial to discovering acceptance.

HIV TREATMENT IS POWER

If you're HIV positive, the decision to begin taking medication can be difficult. But it can be the first step toward reclaiming your life and living longer. Talking to your doctor and getting the right information on HIV treatment can help take you from being in denial to feeling in control.

Take the next step and go to
hivtreatmentispower.com or call **(877) Y-TREAT-HIV**

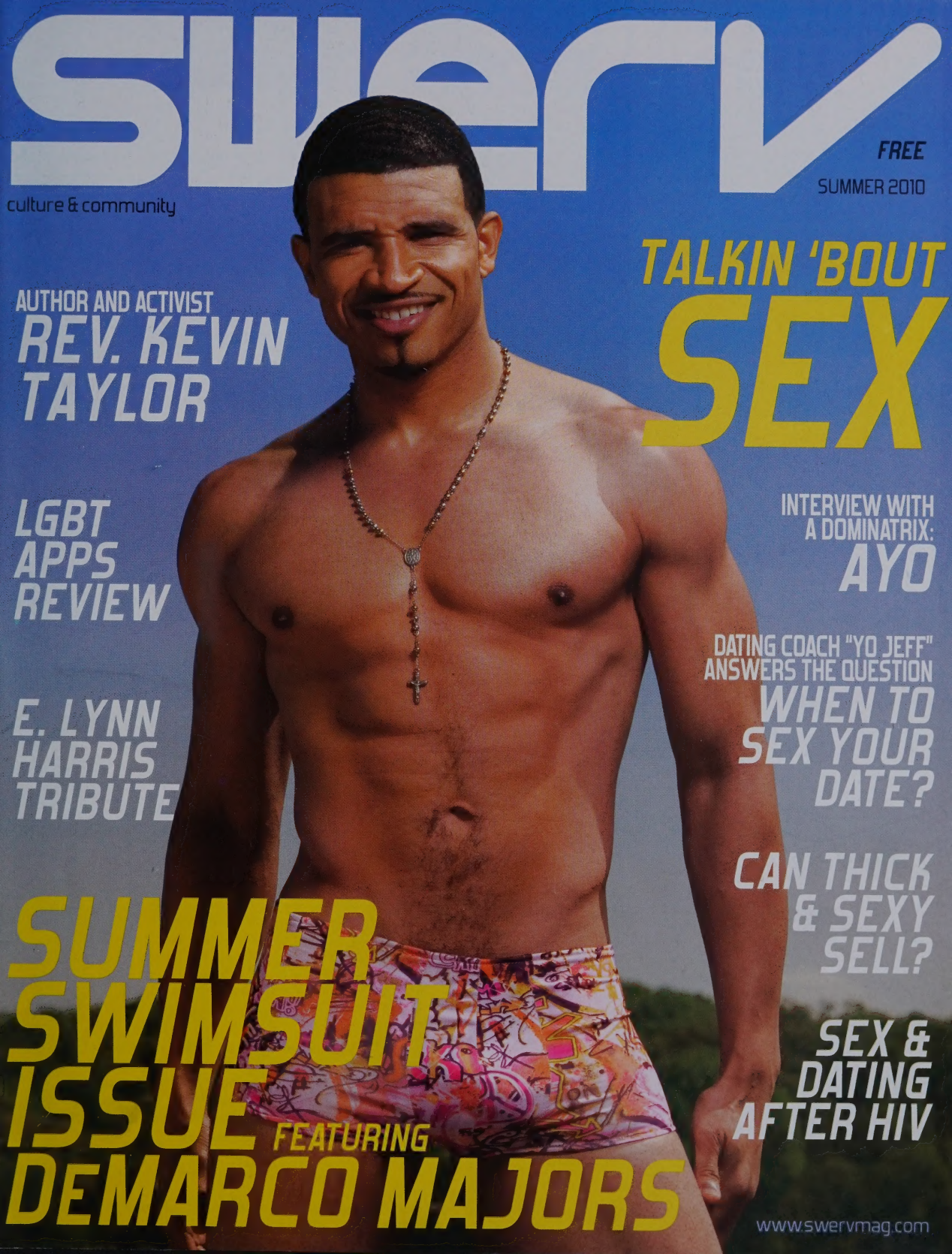
©2009 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT0561B 03

swerv

culture & community

FREE

SUMMER 2010



TALKIN 'BOUT SEX

AUTHOR AND ACTIVIST
REV. KEVIN TAYLOR

LGBT APPS REVIEW

E. LYNN HARRIS TRIBUTE

INTERVIEW WITH A DOMINATRIX:
AYO

DATING COACH "YO JEFF" ANSWERS THE QUESTION
WHEN TO SEX YOUR DATE?

CAN THICK & SEXY SELL?

SEX & DATING AFTER HIV

SUMMER SWIMSUIT ISSUE

FEATURING
DEMARCO MAJORS

www.swervmag.com

REDBONE PRESS

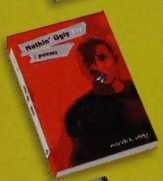
OFFERING YOU AWARD-WINNING LITERATURE

RedBone Press publishes work celebrating the cultures of black lesbians and gay men, and work that further promotes understanding between black gays and lesbians and the black mainstream.

does your mama know? *An Anthology of Black Lesbian Coming Out Stories* is "a sweet read... [There] are beautiful poems and stories, yes, but more than that, they are proof of our existence. —Dale Edwyna Smith
2nd Edition! 17 New Stories!
$19.95 ISBN 0-9786251-6-1

"***the bull-jean stories*** [by Sharon Bridgforth] are a passionate tribute to a fierce woman-loving woman." —Shay Youngblood
$12.00 ISBN 0-9656659-1-7

Bridgforth's ***love conjure/blues*** is "more than a novel, not entirely a stage performance, soulful prose infused with impassioned poetry, best read aloud or at least whispered in the mind." —Richard Labonte
$14.00 ISBN 0-9656659-6-8



Marvin K. White's "attention to detail and craft, humor and a genuine love for people—especially other black gay men—sings through every line of [***nothin' ugly fly***]." —Reginald Harris
$14.00 ISBN 0-9656659-6-8

"***last rights*** [by Marvin K. White] is a powerful passionate collection of verse that explores the essence of what it means to be black and gay." —*Venus Magazine*
$14.00 ISBN 0-9656659-4-1

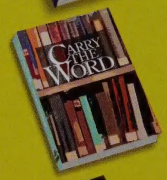
Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity, a collection of essays, centers on the relationships between spirituality, religion and self-acceptance. Edited by G. Winston James and Lisa C. Moore
$16.95 ISBN 0-9656659-3-3

Where the Apple Falls by Samiya Bashir resides at the intersections between woman/ female, both human and environmental, and the concepts to which she is often linked (without her consent): death; rebirth; victim; sexual/perverse.
$14.00 ISBN 0-9656659-7-6

Blood Beats: Vol. 1 *demos, remixes & extended versions.* "[Ernest] Hardy is a critics' critic—the kind of writer that demands that we all go back to the lab and press on." —Mark Anthony Neale
$19.95 ISBN 0-9656659-8-4

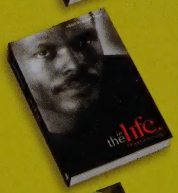
Blood Beats: Vol. 2 *the bootleg joints* by Ernest Hardy. The second collection of film and music criticism from the PEN Award-winning writer.
$19.95 ISBN 0-9656659-9-2

Set in the age of urbanization in the Dominican Republic over the course of several lifetimes, ***Erzulie's Skirt*** by Ana-Maurine Lara is a tale of how women and their families struggle with love, tragedy and destiny.
$15.00 ISBN 0-9786251-0-2



Carry the Word: A Bibliography of Black LGBTQ Books is a seminal reference work, featuring over 600 titles by and about black Same-Gender-Loving (SGL) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer-identified (LGBTQ) writers and culture, as well as interviews and articles about black SGL authors.
$16.95 ISBN 0-9786251-4-5

Brother to Brother New Writings by Black Gay Men, edited by Essex Hemphill. A collection of classic literary work by black gay men. New introduction by Dr. Jafari Allen. **Back in Print!**
$17.00 ISBN 0-9786251-1-0



In the Life: A Black Gay Anthology, edited by Joseph Beam. The seminal black gay men's anthology. New introduction by James Earl Hardy. **Back in Print!**
$17.00 ISBN 0-9786251-2-9

Gospel has been released and is ready to fly! In this passionate follow-up to 2005's Lambda Literary Award finalist *Where the Apple Falls*, Bashir's poems challenge truth to stare down the power of fear and paralysis.
$15.00 ISBN 0-9786251-7-X

Order through your local independent bookseller, library or for more information visit www.redbonepress.com

Photo & Cover: Emile Benjamin

Black mesh top
$100
Black & white striped bikini
$30
Renee Fearnce Designs

www.swervmag.com

swerv

contents

SUMMER 2010

FEATURES

SEX AND THE SINGLE PASTOR 10
Interview with author and activist Rev. Kevin E. Taylor by L. Michael Gipson

YES, AYO! 12
Lisa Joyner delves into the world of BDSM with the sultry dominatrix, Ayo.

DEMARCO MAJORS: MAN ON A MISSION 15
Michael-Christopher gets the game plan from gay basketball player turned model, actor, author and talk show host.

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU WAIT TO SEX YOUR DATE? 19
Dating coach "Yo Jeff" explores the age-old question of when's the right time to get busy.

THE SPIRIT WITHIN 25
Rev. James Watson explores the spiritual side of sex.

POZITIVELY SEXY 26
How being HIV-positive affects self-image by Clarence* J. Fluker

CAN THICK & SEXY SELL? 29
L. MIchael Gipson questions if big boy hotness can rake in the dough.

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR 9
by Michael-Christopher

"THE WAY I SEE IT" 14
Column by Rob Smith

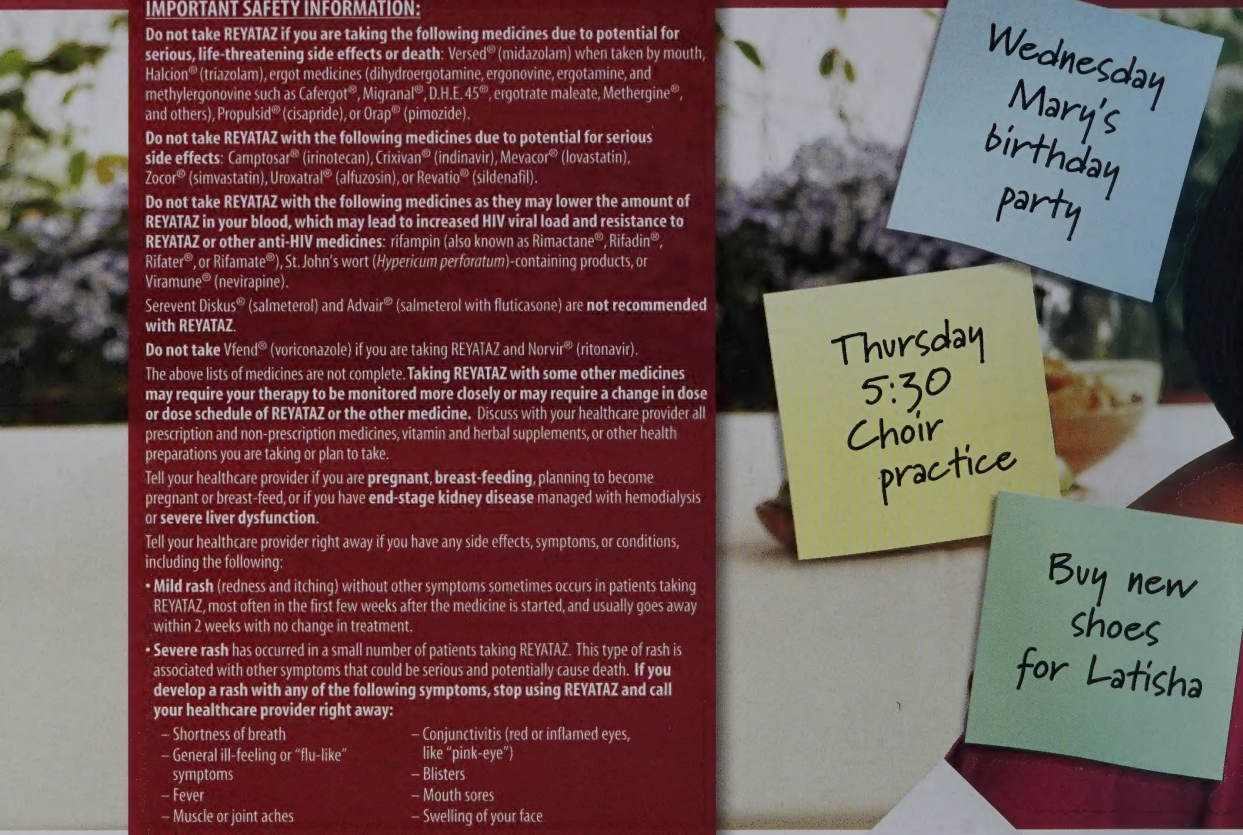
IN THE ZONE 28
Del Hornbuckle keeps us up-to-date on LGBT apps.

BOOKS 28
The new E. Lynn Harris tribute

EVENTS FOR US 30

©2010 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

On REYATAZ,



INDICATION: REYATAZ® (atazanavir sulfate) is a prescription medicine used in combination with other medicines to treat people who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). REYATAZ has been studied in a 48-week trial in patients who have taken anti-HIV medicines and a 96-week trial in patients who have never taken anti-HIV medicines.

REYATAZ does not cure HIV or lower your chance of passing HIV to others.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION:

Do not take REYATAZ if you are taking the following medicines due to potential for serious, life-threatening side effects or death: Versed® (midazolam) when taken by mouth, Halcion® (triazolam), ergot medicines (dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, and methylergonovine such as Cafergot®, Migranal®, D.H.E. 45®, ergotrate maleate, Methergine®, and others), Propulsid® (cisapride), or Orap® (pimozide).

Do not take REYATAZ with the following medicines due to potential for serious side effects: Camptosar® (irinotecan), Crixivan® (indinavir), Mevacor® (lovastatin), Zocor® (simvastatin), Uroxatral® (alfuzosin), or Revatio® (sildenafil).

Do not take REYATAZ with the following medicines as they may lower the amount of REYATAZ in your blood, which may lead to increased HIV viral load and resistance to REYATAZ or other anti-HIV medicines: rifampin (also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®), St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*)-containing products, or Viramune® (nevirapine).

Serevent Diskus® (salmeterol) and Advair® (salmeterol with fluticasone) are **not recommended with REYATAZ**.

Do not take Vfend® (voriconazole) if you are taking REYATAZ and Norvir® (ritonavir).

The above lists of medicines are not complete. **Taking REYATAZ with some other medicines may require your therapy to be monitored more closely or may require a change in dose or dose schedule of REYATAZ or the other medicine.** Discuss with your healthcare provider all prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamin and herbal supplements, or other health preparations you are taking or plan to take.

Tell your healthcare provider if you are **pregnant**, **breast-feeding**, planning to become pregnant or breast-feed, or if you have **end-stage kidney disease** managed with hemodialysis or **severe liver dysfunction**.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any side effects, symptoms, or conditions, including the following:

- **Mild rash** (redness and itching) without other symptoms sometimes occurs in patients taking REYATAZ, most often in the first few weeks after the medicine is started, and usually goes away within 2 weeks with no change in treatment.
- **Severe rash** has occurred in a small number of patients taking REYATAZ. This type of rash is associated with other symptoms that could be serious and potentially cause death. **If you develop a rash with any of the following symptoms, stop using REYATAZ and call your healthcare provider right away:**
  - Shortness of breath
  - General ill-feeling or "flu-like" symptoms
  - Fever
  - Muscle or joint aches
  - Conjunctivitis (red or inflamed eyes, like "pink-eye")
  - Blisters
  - Mouth sores
  - Swelling of your face
- **Yellowing of the skin and/or eyes** may occur due to increases in bilirubin levels in the blood (bilirubin is made by the liver).
- **A change in the way your heart beats** may occur. You may feel dizzy or lightheaded. These could be symptoms of a heart problem.
- **Diabetes and high blood sugar** may occur in patients taking protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ. Some patients may need changes in their diabetes medicine.
- **If you have liver disease**, including hepatitis B or C, it may get worse when you take anti-HIV medicines like REYATAZ.
- **Kidney stones** have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ. Signs or symptoms of kidney stones include pain in your side, blood in your urine, and pain when you urinate.
- **Some patients with hemophilia** have increased bleeding problems with protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ.
- **Changes in body fat** have been seen in some patients taking anti-HIV medicines. The cause and long-term effects are not known at this time.
- **Gallbladder disorders** (including gallstones and gallbladder inflammation) have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ.

Other common side effects of REYATAZ taken with other anti-HIV medicines include: nausea; headache; stomach pain; vomiting; diarrhea; depression; fever; dizziness; trouble sleeping; numbness, tingling, or burning of hands or feet; and muscle pain.

You should take REYATAZ once daily with food (a meal or snack). Swallow the capsules whole; do not open the capsules. You should take REYATAZ and your other anti-HIV medicines exactly as instructed by your healthcare provider.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

REYATAZ®

(atazanavir sulfate) 200 mg/300 mg capsules

Fight HIV your way.

Please see Important Patient Information about REYATAZ on the adjacent pages.

how you spend your time is up to you.

Once-daily REYATAZ can help fight your HIV.

REYATAZ, a protease inhibitor (PI), in HIV combination therapy:

- Can help lower your viral load and raise your T-cell (CD4+ cell) count
- Has a low chance of diarrhea (shown in clinical trials)
  - REYATAZ in combination therapy had a 1%-3% rate of moderate-to-severe diarrhea in adults.
- Is taken once a day with a snack or meal

REYATAZ is one of several treatment options your doctor may consider.

Do not take REYATAZ if you are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients.

Ask your healthcare team about REYATAZ **www.REYATAZ.com**

REYATAZ does not cure HIV, and has not been shown to reduce the risk of passing HIV to others.

Bristol-Myers Squibb

REYATAZ is a registered trademark of Bristol-Myers Squibb.
All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners and not of Bristol-Myers Squibb.
© 2010 Bristol-Myers Squibb, Princeton, NJ 08543 U.S.A.
687US10AB05505 05/10

If you or someone you know needs help paying for medicine, call 1-888-4PPA-NOW (1-888-477-2669). Or go to www.pparx.org

Partnership for Prescription Assistance

FDA-Approved Patient Labeling **℞ ONLY**

Patient Information

REYATAZ® (RAY-ah-taz)
(generic name = **atazanavir sulfate**)
Capsules

ALERT: Find out about medicines that should NOT be taken with REYATAZ. Read the section "What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?"

Read the Patient Information that comes with REYATAZ before you start using it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This leaflet provides a summary about REYATAZ and does not include everything there is to know about your medicine. This information does not take the place of talking with your healthcare provider about your medical condition or treatment.

What is REYATAZ?

REYATAZ is a prescription medicine used with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people who are infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV is the virus that causes acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS). REYATAZ is a type of anti-HIV medicine called a protease inhibitor. HIV infection destroys CD4+ (T) cells, which are important to the immune system. The immune system helps fight infection. After a large number of (T) cells are destroyed, AIDS develops. REYATAZ helps to block HIV protease, an enzyme that is needed for the HIV virus to multiply. REYATAZ may lower the amount of HIV in your blood, help your body keep its supply of CD4+ (T) cells, and reduce the risk of death and illness associated with HIV.

Does REYATAZ cure HIV or AIDS?

REYATAZ does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. At present there is no cure for HIV infection. People taking REYATAZ may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Opportunistic infections are infections that develop because the immune system is weak. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections. **It is very important that you see your healthcare provider regularly while taking REYATAZ.**

REYATAZ does not lower your chance of passing HIV to other people through sexual contact, sharing needles, or being exposed to your blood. For your health and the health of others, it is important to always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom or other barrier to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood. Never use or share dirty needles.

Who should not take REYATAZ?

Do not take REYATAZ if you:

- **are taking certain medicines.** (See "What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?") Serious life-threatening side effects or death may happen. Before you take REYATAZ, tell your healthcare provider about all medicines you are taking or planning to take. These include other prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
- **are allergic to REYATAZ or to any of its ingredients.** The active ingredient is atazanavir sulfate. See the end of this leaflet for a complete list of ingredients in REYATAZ. Tell your healthcare provider if you think you have had an allergic reaction to any of these ingredients.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before I take REYATAZ?

Tell your healthcare provider:

- **If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.** It is not known if REYATAZ can harm your unborn baby. Pregnant women have experienced serious side effects when taking REYATAZ with other HIV medicines called nucleoside analogues. You and your healthcare provider will need to decide if REYATAZ is right for you. If you use REYATAZ while you are pregnant, talk to your healthcare provider about the Antiretroviral Pregnancy Registry.
- **If you are breast-feeding.** You should not breast-feed if you are HIV-positive because of the chance of passing HIV to your baby. Also, it is not known if REYATAZ can pass into your breast milk and if it can harm your baby. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.
- **If you have liver problems or are infected with the hepatitis B or C virus.** See "What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?"
- **If you have end stage kidney disease** managed with hemodialysis.
- **If you have diabetes.** See "What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?"
- **If you have hemophilia.** See "What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?"
- **About all the medicines you take** including prescription and nonprescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Keep a list of your medicines with you to show your healthcare provider. For more information, see "What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?" and "Who should not take REYATAZ?" Some medicines can cause serious side effects if taken with REYATAZ.

How should I take REYATAZ?

- **Take REYATAZ once every day exactly as instructed by your healthcare provider.** Your healthcare provider will prescribe the amount of REYATAZ that is right for you.
  - For adults who have never taken anti-HIV medicines before, the dose is 300 mg once daily with 100 mg of NORVIR® (ritonavir) once daily taken with food. For adults who are unable to tolerate ritonavir, 400 mg (two 200-mg capsules) once daily (without NORVIR®) taken with food is recommended.
  - For adults who have taken anti-HIV medicines in the past, the usual dose is 300 mg plus 100 mg of NORVIR® (ritonavir) once daily taken with food.
- Your dose will depend on your liver function and on the other anti-HIV medicines that you are taking. REYATAZ is always used with other anti-HIV medicines. If you are taking REYATAZ with SUSTIVA® (efavirenz) or with VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate), you should also be taking NORVIR® (ritonavir).
- **Always take REYATAZ with food** (a meal or snack) to help it work better. Swallow the capsules whole. **Do not open the capsules.** Take REYATAZ at the same time each day.
- **If you are taking antacids or didanosine (VIDEX® or VIDEX® EC)**, take REYATAZ 2 hours before or 1 hour after these medicines.
- **If you are taking medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), ZANTAC® (ranitidine), AcipHex® (rabeprazole), NEXIUM® (esomeprazole), PREVACID® (lansoprazole), PRILOSEC® (omeprazole), or PROTONIX® (pantoprazole)**, talk to your healthcare provider.
- **Do not change your dose or stop taking REYATAZ without first talking with your healthcare provider.** It is important to stay under a healthcare provider's care while taking REYATAZ.
- **When your supply of REYATAZ starts to run low,** get more from your healthcare provider or pharmacy. It is important not to run out of REYATAZ. The amount of HIV in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time.
- **If you miss a dose of REYATAZ,** take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If, however, it is within 6 hours of your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose. **It is important that you do not miss any doses of REYATAZ or your other anti-HIV medicines.**
- **If you take more than the prescribed dose of REYATAZ,** call your healthcare provider or poison control center right away.

Can children take REYATAZ?

Dosing recommendations are available for children 6 years of age and older for REYATAZ Capsules. Dosing recommendations are not available for children from 3 months to less than 6 years of age. REYATAZ should not be used in babies under the age of 3 months.

What are the possible side effects of REYATAZ?

The following list of side effects is **not** complete. Report any new or continuing symptoms to your healthcare provider. If you have questions about side effects, ask your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider may be able to help you manage these side effects.

The following side effects have been reported with REYATAZ:

- **mild rash** (redness and itching) without other symptoms sometimes occurs in patients taking REYATAZ, most often in the first few weeks after the medicine is started. Rashes usually go away within 2 weeks with no change in treatment. Tell your healthcare provider if rash occurs.
- **severe rash:** In a small number of patients, a rash can develop that is associated with other symptoms which could be serious and potentially cause death.

  If you develop a rash with any of the following symptoms stop using REYATAZ and call your healthcare provider right away:
  - shortness of breath
  - general ill feeling or "flu-like" symptoms
  - fever
  - muscle or joint aches
  - conjunctivitis (red or inflamed eyes, like "pink eye")
  - blisters
  - mouth sores
  - swelling of your face
- **yellowing of the skin or eyes.** These effects may be due to increases in bilirubin levels in the blood (bilirubin is made by the liver). Call your healthcare provider if your skin or the white part of your eyes turn yellow. Although these effects may not be damaging to your liver, skin, or eyes, it is important to tell your healthcare provider promptly if they occur.

- **a change in the way your heart beats (heart rhythm change).** Call your healthcare provider right away if you get dizzy or lightheaded. These could be symptoms of a heart problem.
- **diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia)** sometimes happen in patients taking protease inhibitor medicines like REYATAZ. Some patients had diabetes before taking protease inhibitors while others did not. Some patients may need changes in their diabetes medicine.
- **if you have liver disease** including hepatitis B or C, your liver disease may get worse when you take anti-HIV medicines like REYATAZ.
- **kidney stones** have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ. If you develop signs or symptoms of kidney stones (pain in your side, blood in your urine, pain when you urinate) tell your healthcare provider promptly.
- **some patients with hemophilia** have increased bleeding problems with protease inhibitors like REYATAZ.
- **changes in body fat.** These changes may include an increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms, and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

Other common side effects of REYATAZ taken with other anti-HIV medicines include nausea; headache; stomach pain; vomiting; diarrhea; depression; fever; dizziness; trouble sleeping; numbness, tingling, or burning of hands or feet; and muscle pain.

Gallbladder disorders (which may include gallstones and gallbladder inflammation) have been reported in patients taking REYATAZ.

What important information should I know about taking REYATAZ with other medicines?

Do not take REYATAZ if you take the following medicines (not all brands may be listed; tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take). REYATAZ may cause serious, life-threatening side effects or death when used with these medicines.

- Ergot medicines: dihydroergotamine, ergonovine, ergotamine, and methylergonovine such as CAFERGOT®, MIGRANAL®, D.H.E. 45®, ergotrate maleate, METHERGINE®, and others (used for migraine headaches).
- ORAP® (pimozide, used for Tourette's disorder).
- PROPULSID® (cisapride, used for certain stomach problems).
- Triazolam, also known as HALCION® (used for insomnia).
- Midazolam, also known as VERSED® (used for sedation), when taken by mouth.

Do not take the following medicines with REYATAZ because of possible serious side effects:

- CAMPTOSAR® (irinotecan, used for cancer).
- CRIXIVAN® (indinavir, used for HIV infection). Both REYATAZ and CRIXIVAN sometimes cause increased levels of bilirubin in the blood.
- Cholesterol-lowering medicines MEVACOR® (lovastatin) or ZOCOR® (simvastatin).
- UROXATRAL® (alfuzosin, used to treat benign enlargement of the prostate).
- REVATIO® (sildenafil, used to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension).

Do not take the following medicines with REYATAZ because they may lower the amount of REYATAZ in your blood. This may lead to an increased HIV viral load. Resistance to REYATAZ or cross-resistance to other HIV medicines may develop:

- Rifampin (also known as RIMACTANE®, RIFADIN®, RIFATER®, or RIFAMATE®, used for tuberculosis).
- St. John's wort *(Hypericum perforatum)*, an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort.
- VIRAMUNE® (nevirapine, used for HIV infection).

The following medicines are not recommended with REYATAZ:

- SEREVENT DISKUS® (salmeterol) and ADVAIR® (salmeterol with fluticasone), used to treat asthma, emphysema/chronic obstructive pulmonary disease also known as COPD.

Do not take the following medicine if you are taking REYATAZ and NORVIR® together:

- VFEND® (voriconazole).

The following medicines may require your healthcare provider to monitor your therapy more closely (for some medicines a change in the dose or dose schedule may be needed):

- CIALIS® (tadalafil), LEVITRA® (vardenafil), or VIAGRA® (sildenafil), used to treat erectile dysfunction. REYATAZ may increase the chances of serious side effects that can happen with CIALIS, LEVITRA, or VIAGRA. Do not use CIALIS, LEVITRA, or VIAGRA while you are taking REYATAZ unless your healthcare provider tells you it is okay.
- ADCIRCA® (tadalafil) or TRACLEER® (bosentan), used to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension.
- LIPITOR® (atorvastatin) or CRESTOR® (rosuvastatin). There is an increased chance of serious side effects if you take REYATAZ with this cholesterol-lowering medicine.

REYATAZ® (atazanavir sulfate)

- Medicines for abnormal heart rhythm: CORDARONE® (amiodarone), lidocaine, quinidine (also known as CARDIOQUIN®, QUINIDEX®, and others).
- MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin, an antibiotic used to treat tuberculosis).
- BUPRENEX®, SUBUTEX®, SUBOXONE®, (buprenorphine or buprenorphine/naloxone, used to treat pain and addiction to narcotic painkillers).
- VASCOR® (bepridil, used for chest pain).
- COUMADIN® (warfarin).
- Tricyclic antidepressants such as ELAVIL® (amitriptyline), NORPRAMIN® (desipramine), SINEQUAN® (doxepin), SURMONTIL® (trimipramine), TOFRANIL® (imipramine), or VIVACTIL® (protriptyline).
- Medicines to prevent organ transplant rejection: SANDIMMUNE® or NEORAL® (cyclosporin), RAPAMUNE® (sirolimus), or PROGRAF® (tacrolimus).
- The antidepressant trazodone (DESYREL® and others).
- Fluticasone propionate (FLONASE®, FLOVENT®), given by nose or inhaled to treat allergic symptoms or asthma. Your doctor may choose not to keep you on fluticasone, especially if you are also taking NORVIR®.
- Colchicine (COLCRYS®), used to prevent or treat gout or treat familial Mediterranean fever.

The following medicines may require a change in the dose or dose schedule of either REYATAZ or the other medicine:

- INVIRASE® (saquinavir).
- NORVIR® (ritonavir).
- SUSTIVA® (efavirenz).
- Antacids or buffered medicines.
- VIDEX® (didanosine).
- VIREAD® (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate).
- MYCOBUTIN® (rifabutin).
- Calcium channel blockers such as CARDIZEM® or TIAZAC® (diltiazem), COVERA-HS® or ISOPTIN SR® (verapamil) and others.
- BIAXIN® (clarithromycin).
- Medicines for indigestion, heartburn, or ulcers such as AXID® (nizatidine), PEPCID AC® (famotidine), TAGAMET® (cimetidine), or ZANTAC® (ranitidine).

Talk to your healthcare provider about choosing an effective method of contraception. REYATAZ may affect the safety and effectiveness of hormonal contraceptives such as birth control pills or the contraceptive patch. Hormonal contraceptives do not prevent the spread of HIV to others.

Remember:

1. **Know all the medicines you take.**
2. **Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take.**
3. **Do not start a new medicine without talking to your healthcare provider.**

How should I store REYATAZ?

- Store REYATAZ Capsules at room temperature, 59° to 86° F (15° to 30° C). Do **not** store this medicine in a damp place such as a bathroom medicine cabinet or near the kitchen sink.
- Keep your medicine in a tightly closed container.
- Keep all medicines out of the reach of children and pets at all times. Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Dispose of unused medicines through community take-back disposal programs when available or place REYATAZ in an unrecognizable, closed container in the household trash.

General information about REYATAZ

This medicine was prescribed for your particular condition. Do not use REYATAZ for another condition. Do not give REYATAZ to other people, even if they have the same symptoms you have. It may harm them. **Keep REYATAZ and all medicines out of the reach of children and pets.**

This summary does not include everything there is to know about REYATAZ. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for conditions that are not mentioned in patient information leaflets. Remember no written summary can replace careful discussion with your healthcare provider. If you would like more information, talk with your healthcare provider or you can call 1-800-321-1335.

What are the ingredients in REYATAZ?

Active Ingredient: atazanavir sulfate

Inactive Ingredients: Crospovidone, lactose monohydrate (milk sugar), magnesium stearate, gelatin, FD&C Blue #2, and titanium dioxide.

VIDEX® and REYATAZ® are registered trademarks of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company. COUMADIN® and SUSTIVA® are registered trademarks of Bristol-Myers Squibb Pharma Company. DESYREL® is a registered trademark of Mead Johnson and Company. Other brands listed are the trademarks of their respective owners and are not trademarks of Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.

Bristol-Myers Squibb
Princeton, NJ 08543 USA

1246226A7 F1-B0001B-04-10 Rev April 2010

Welcome to C. Alan Salons & Spas

· Have you been seeking new opportunities in the Beauty Industry?

· Are you looking to join an innovative and talented team of Stylists and Barbers?

· Do you have a passion for Exceptional Customer Service?

· We are seeking the Best and Brightest Talent in the Washington DC area.

We offer:
· 5 Beautiful Salon locations
· Competitive Booth Rent
· Advanced Classes

District of Columbia Cosmetology/ Barber-Stylist License Required!
An established clientele a plus

Locations:
2624 Georgia Avenue, NW
2824 Georgia Avenue, NW
923 U Street, NW
2100 Martin Luther King Avenue, SE
4th & Rhode Island Avenue, NE

Contact: (202) 526-1400 ext 42

contributors

Emile Benjamin's work reflects a broad and enthusiastic exploration of techniques and subject matter. His photos chronicle his professional and personal life —wherever Emile goes, so does his camera. You can find a little of his personality, humor and style in each moment he captures—sometimes he actually captures himself.

"Yo Jeff" Carroll, the Hip Hop Dating Coach, addresses the issues of dating in his writing, books and films. In 2004 he wrote and produced the award-winning movie *Gold Digger Killer* which received critical acclaim both in the hip hop community and in mainstream media. In 2005 he presented his "Hip Hop Dating Codes," which were endorsed by hip hop culturalist KRS-ONE. Jeff speaks to youth nationally about how not having a date kept him from his high school prom, his 3 years of celibacy in his late 20s and how he avoided the lure of female players. Jeff has written articles for *Programming* magazine and hip hop newspapers and magazines nationwide. Jeff lives with his wife and son in South Florida.

Clarence* J. Fluker is a freelance writer and blogger based in Washington, D.C. His work has appeared in a variety of print and online publications including *ARISE* magazine, where he served as Next Generation editor. His essay, "A Nation Divided," appears in the acclaimed anthology *Spirited* from RedBone Press. Fluker earned his undergraduate degree from Morgan State University and his graduate degree from American University.

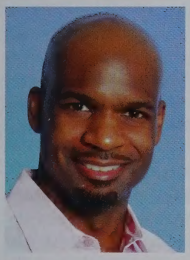
L. Michael Gipson is an Oakland-based cultural critic, community health planner and award-winning youth advocate. His sociopolitical essays have been published in two anthologies, including *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* (Chester Hartman, ed.). As a cultural critic and music journalist, Gipson's work has appeared in *Clik*, *Pulse*, *Arise*, *Pride*, *Amplify*, *Urban Dialect*, *Port of Harlem* and *Creative Loafing ATL*. He is editor and columnist at www.SoulTracks.com and heard weekly as "Cornfed" on *The Dave Brown Radio Show*.

Lisa Joyner is a freelance writer/editor, activist and a producer on WPFW's LGBT radio show, *Inside Out*, in Washington, D.C. Her recent work includes poetry in the anthologies *Growing Up Girl: A Manifesta* and *Just Like a Girl*. She lives in Washington, D.C.

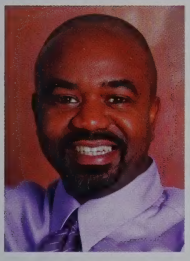
Rev. James Watson, former active duty Air Force, now employed with the Department of Defense, was formally ordained in the Catholic faith in 1999, and has lived in the Washington, D.C. area for the past 20 years. His writing portfolio includes published poetry, a one-act play to be featured in Bethesda, Md. and an original piece of prose featured on the BBC during the 1995 Million Man March.

Washington, D.C. native Yardé Noir began Genesys Productions before graduating from Duke Ellington School of the Arts in 1997. Noir went on to Bennett Career Institute majoring in hair and make-up, lending his talents as an experienced cosmetologist. Noir has worked as a make-up artist for Smashbox Cosmetics and Pretty by PR, and sits on the artistic team for Joya Cosmetics. Noir is the 2008 Elite Beauty Make-Up Competition Winner. Noir also attended the Art Institute of Washington majoring in graphic design and is currently pursuing a master educator's license.

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com



MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR



JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/MARKETING/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:
RIVENDELL MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

From the Editor

Oh that three-letter word! It's what got each and everyone of us to this Earth; it's something many can't live without; something we spend a lot of time, money and energy trying to get; it's brought people together; and torn many apart. I'm talking about sex.

It's fascinating how sex can have infinite incarnations, levels of expression and significance. Sex can be a very enriching, passionate experience, connecting people at the most spiritual level; or it can be quick, dirty and anonymous, having no meaning at all except to satisfy an urge.

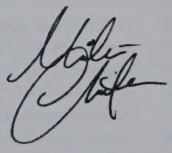
We hear constantly that sex sells, but at the same time we're told the preoccupation of sex over one's character is superficial. Even one's sexual style can speak to perceptions of said character. Depending on what you do (or don't do) you can be labeled a prude, a freak or a slut.

With all of these contradictions and conundrums it's a wonder anyone gets any sex at all. The trick, I suppose, is finding someone with a similar sexuality.

Sex and sexuality are so highly coveted that people even discriminate over it, establish laws regulating it, and beat and kill over it (clearly they're not getting any). Since most religions have attempted to dictate what is sexually appropriate, I thought it best to include the opinions of the ordained. In this issue, contributor Rev. James Watson explains sex is an important part of one's spirit and should be respected as such. L. Michael Gipson dares to mix sex and politics in his interview with Rev. Kevin E. Taylor on the hottest topics facing the LGBT community today. Lisa Joyner speaks with Ayo, a dominatrix who freely explores and experiments with her sexuality, and Clarence* J. Fluker looks at sexual image post-HIV diagnosis.

In these times of instant gratification many of us are putting the cart before the horse contributing to a "sex first, ask questions later" society. That's fine if that's all you're looking for, but deep down most of us want to be loved by that special someone. This brings up the age-old question: When is it appropriate to have sex with someone you're dating? Coincidentally, some very good advice came from someone I've known since the first grade. Jeff "Yo Jeff" Carroll, the Hip Hop Dating Coach, contacted me wanting to contribute to *SWERV*. His request couldn't have been more timely. Since the black LGBT community is one which operates much more covertly than its counterparts, we have little visible guidance for things like sex and relationships. And as we can see from the increase of hookup sites, sex parties, and HIV and STD infection rates, there's some lessons that need to be learned by young and old.

With all the many wonderful, satisfying and confusing facets of sex swirling around the universe, we hope to shed some light on this prevalent yet not often properly discussed subject. It's my belief that people must know themselves sexually before they can have good sex. So read, learn and explore, safely and honestly. And most of all, enjoy!



Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

Photo: Scott Herbert

SEX &

Words/L. Michael Gipson

The *SWERV* sex issue wouldn't be a sex issue without a word from a religious leader on sex, politics and spirituality. The black gay populist answer to Harvard University chaplain Rev. Peter J. Gomes, Rev. Kevin E. Taylor is well on his way to becoming one of the most famous black, openly gay religious teachers in the country. Originally making his mark as the creator and producer of such critically acclaimed BET shows as *Notarized*, *Testimony* and *Access Granted*, Taylor had an epiphany in 2001 after circumstances led to him side-stepping two catastrophic plane crashes just weeks apart. Realizing life's brevity, Taylor seized his purpose, completed ministerial studies, and founded a Unity Fellowship church in New Brunswick, N.J. The inspirational speaker and Internet life coach (KevinETaylor.biz) further distinguished himself as a popular author through the self-help book *Unclutter: Cleanse Your Spirit and Claim Your Stuff* (2003), the fictional love story *Jaded* (2006) and his latest release *It's Time for Some Action: 10 Common Sense Steps to Take Your Life Back and Then to the Next Level*. Taylor, who is a visible advocate of New Jersey's successful marriage equality movement and a very eligible bachelor, sat down with *SWERV* to spread the good news and dish a little dirt about the single life of a pastor who's living out loud.

SWERV: In the midst of this national push for same-sex marriage, have queer sex-positives lost out to gay conservatives who advocate that gays are heteros with better taste?

Kevin E. Taylor: I don't know that "lost out" is necessarily appropriate. The struggle is that we continue to act like our communities are a monolithic entity that can only focus on one issue at a time. Perhaps we do lose ground by not being able to have HIV/AIDS groups loudly screaming about funding while another group is talking about marriage equality, and yet another deals with, nay, lobbies for, LBGT youth! They are all cover story issues.

SWERV: Do you see same-sex marriage as a restrictive "fix" for those untamed gay men ruled by out-of-control libidos? Is it rewarding the "good gays" with state and federal insurance coverage for following status quo rules? Or is it both?

KET: Marriage, to me, is the romantic opportunity to join your lives together. Period. People who don't want to get married won't and shouldn't. Marriage didn't stop Tiger Woods or Jesse James from stepping out continually on their wives. If you want to be married and build a family, you should have the right and the rights. Oprah and Stedman aren't married and neither are many other couples we love and revere.

SWERV: With discussions of HIV/AIDS and same-sex marriage advocacy, have gays reintroduced stigma and shame to the catch-as-catch-can sex lives of those gay singles and couples with open door policies, pushing gay sexual liberation back in the closet?

KET: So many gay men have these conversations like they are married to each other, forgive the pun. The increased numbers [of rising infection rates] in HIV/AIDS are about protection leaving our conversations, not promiscuity! If you are going to have a conversation, where's the conversation about barebacking being a new norm? Where are the conversations about making safe sex erotic and hot and not restrictive and boring? We are the ones who seem unable to juggle both the conversations of hot and sexy sex and protection at the same time. Marriage has nothing to do with sex (ask couples around the U.S.A.). The marriage part is saying: I have the right to protect the person I call my family.

SWERV: Do most black men, regardless of orientation, struggle with intimacy and how to communicate affection, fondness, attraction or endearment without sex? Or are the frustrated among us merely trying to feminize and moralize what is just inherently male?

KET: I think that's a truth for most men, period. Men are programmed from the earliest age to "man up," "don't cry" and even "take it like a man." Part of the gruff, sometimes even savage, perception of sex for men is languaged in ways that make the man a pole and a part. The language of men and sex is never about intimacy because that's not what the little boy was told. Intimacy is a learned practice for men. I think that communication between men has to happen when clothes are on

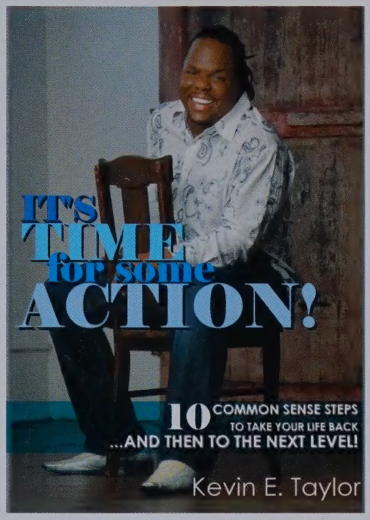
THE SINGLE PASTOR

and feelings are present. It's a new practice to show up and be seen.

SWERV: With XTube.com besting the Adam4Adams for personal meet'n'mate profiles, have we moved serious dating and relationships too far out of reach? Are relationship seekers who frequent sex sites fooling themselves when their behavioral focus and primary hangouts are dominated by the hunt for easy substitutes like sex?
KET: Absolutely. I find it intriguing to see people engaging in body part exchanges with photos and then asking you to not "get caught up." People are walking into the room naked and wondering why [others] can't see past the parts. It's like the woman with the big breasts and deep cleavage mad at guys for not looking in her face. So the truth is that many people are offering what they believe is their "best asset" and hoping that with that out of the way, the other person will continue reading. That's not happening and that is the frustration. If your face isn't enough, then he'll never look you in the face. People are seriously and secretly praying for affection but afraid to say it—not because of the site, but because of their past, when they put affection first and got hurt.

SWERV: In your new book* [It's Time for Some Action]*, you lay out a blueprint and exercises for readers to reclaim a balanced life, which implies that many lives are unbalanced. Why do you think the lives of some black gay men have become unbalanced, and how does this book equal them out?
KET: In the book, I deal with the negative things that need action (like procrastination and forgiveness) and the positive possibilities (such as love and self-image). I think that all people lose focus and my hope is that the book gives people permission to stop and make themselves their No. 1 priority. No matter what you have to do, it needs the best you to show up. For black gay people, finding the balance is about loving yourself beyond the church, beyond people's permission or approval. Every day, breath is your permission to live well.

SWERV: When I hear you're simultaneously a minister, a life coach, a producer, a novelist, a father and a grandfather, I hear a workaholic. How do you find balance?



KET: I find balance every day. I am doing me and in doing so I find time for it all. It's so equaled out that I have entire days of freedom and frivolity to watch a marathon of *Law & Order: SVU*. I find balance by knowing when to shut it down and just chill. I have realized that I've got to take care of me and so I know when to say "no."

SWERV: As a single minister who is out in the dating world, how do you "get your life" and maintain public and personal respectability as a man and a minister?
KET: I have never been a clubber. People from D.C. never believed that I never saw the inside of The Clubhouse [a defunct popular nightclub], though I was one to twirl in Tracks with DJ Sedrick! I am not going to be at a bar, unless there's a karaoke night. I also am not ashamed of being caught with a glass of wine in my hand because I know the difference between my own refreshment and overindulgence. Gluttony is the sin and we are a gluttonous culture. I don't go out because it trips people out more than me. I will spend time at Barnes & Noble reading and I love a good movie. I have always met guys that way—living my life—and I think I always will.

SWERV: In light of the Donnie McClurkin controversies, and the pervasive stories of ministers trolling for sex on the Internet, how do you view closeted clergy and the damage of sexual hypocrisy from the pulpit?
KET: I cannot tell you how many clergy hit me up online! It's funny that many guys will step when they think I'm a pastor of a "mainstream" church, but when they realize it's open and affirming, they freak out. Our young people are pulling away from churches everywhere because they are seeing the hypocrisy of the pastor who preaches one thing and then does another, from being on the Net [while] in the closet to seeing him push up on a sexy woman who is not his wife. I view these clergy as hypocrites and definitely a detriment to our society. [It's similar] to me that the Bible and its powerful Ten Commandments implore us to not lie ("thou shall not bear false witness"), but homosexuality is nowhere on the list, yet, somehow, the church has made it a hot-button issue to scare people. Donnie McClurkin is gay-baiting and he should know better. Since he's pimping the subject for more bookings and because of his own demons, we have to simply come out of those churches, for God's sake—literally!

SWERV: What do you say to black gay men still struggling with sexuality and spirituality and those who view affirming churches as spiritually lesser than their more conservative father's house?
KET: I simply say to them that I preach the Gospel. So many gay men think that "affirming" means that we are teaching from something other than the Bible. I have found that they always find themselves open and more receptive when they realize it's the Bible they grew up on but rarely read. To watch people's faces contort and mouths open when they actually hear the Scripture after that, or that Leviticus includes not eating shrimp or mixing fabrics and then the reason is explained, it's a wonder. The Bible says, "Don't be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." It's time for us to change our minds because the truth is we are after approval and acceptance from men and women, and when you walk in spirituality, you've got to shift your focus...higher!

YES, AYO!

Words/Lisa Joyner

There's a mystery surrounding the topic of bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism (BDSM). Although I don't know actual numbers, I am aware that within the black lesbian and transgender communities there is a group of women who frequent BDSM parties as well as recruit an occasional dominatrix to teach and inflict roles of S&M on themselves and, at times, their partners. These women know what they want, and they search for the perfect "Daddy," as a female dominatrix is often called.

On a recent hot spring day I sat down with Ayo, a dominatrix, whom I met at a play party in Washington, D.C. (I was there for research purposes). At the D.C. event she was dressed in black latex and black hooker pumps and demonstrated to more than one hundred women the skills of performing safe asphyxiation (leaning) on your partner. Yes, ***SWERV*** readers, our nation's capitol has some folks who are taking charge of their sexual experiences and satisfying what some consider a necessary release.

After I got over the initial shock of Ayo's entry to the den dressed in an animal print robe that served no purpose (she was nude and the robe was wide open), we played cat and mouse through BDSM topics not usually discussed in average, everyday conversations. I finally settled down to achieving my goals for the conversation: to separate fact from fiction, get answers that would enlighten readers, and no longer be vanilla about a world that is often considered taboo. I asked Ayo to start by defining some terminology.

BDSM

Ayo: Bondage, discipline, sadism and masochism; [it's] often referred to as S&M for the ease of comfort. I usually don't like to use [all the] words because it scares people. I will always call it erotic play, or BDSM, 'cause [it] comes across a little more soft. Usually BDSM people know exactly what you're talking about; it doesn't scare them like [the term] S&M.

Dominatrix and Submissive

Ayo says, "A dominatrix is a woman who acknowledges both her dominant and submissive nature and uses it accordingly. To be a dom you have to understand what your submissive wants in order to please them. Give them what they need and vice versa. A submissive has to know how to please their dominant. My theory is this: If you are gonna understand anything, you have to understand all aspects of it. You just can't have one dogmatic viewpoint. I think it's very instrumental for people to actually switch up those roles in order to understand what being a Daddy is about and to understand what being a pet is about, or whatever you choose to call yourselves. [Those who go between both roles are called switches.]"

When asked if she is a dominatrix full-time, Ayo answers with another term that I have never heard before. "No… well, I wouldn't say full-time. I don't live the Gorean lifestyle. Gorean is a 24/7 domination and submissive relationship. If you are living a Gorean lifestyle and you are a dominant in that lifestyle, your submissive might as well throw away her identification 'cause she needs nothing.

They might as well not even have a Social Security number. She would have to stop working. Her every waking breath would be to please. The Kajira [slave] no longer has identification, no name. That's what submissives are called in the Gorean lifestyle, but I don't live that lifestyle, 'cause I don't require any of my submissives to be Kajira to me. The traditional position for a Kajira is to sit on the back of their feet with their hands behind their back or kneeling straight out with their arms in front of them. That's all they do all day long, until their master instructs them to do something. They don't even go by dominant and submissive; they go straight to master and slave. So, your Kajira basically does not address you by calling you Daddy or Mistress or whatever… they just call you Master."

Upon further research I learned that there is some commonality in BDSM and the Gorean lifestyle; there are also some major differences. In the Gorean lifestyle there is "Total Power Exchange"; it is an absolute lifestyle, and no impediment to the owner's power is accepted. There is also the belief that males have a predisposition to be more dominant and females have a predisposition to be submissive. Lastly, such things as "safe words" do not exist in the Gorean lifestyle as they do in BDSM.

Play

Ayo explains, "Most submissives like to be spanked and slapped and talked shit to. They like having their hair pulled. Then you have some women that don't like to be slapped, but do like to be spanked. They come with their own limitations or whatever, but I guess the kinda women that I play with, we kinda seek each other out because they're looking for a Daddy that's gonna slap them and spank them; toss them and stuff. They are all femmes. I haven't met a submissive butch yet. They're rare in the gay community. I've been looking for one. All the studs I've run into appear to be dominant. They're not really submissive, and if you talk about submission they're just like, "What are you talking about?" They think it's an attack against their manhood. Is that what they call it, manhood or studhood? Well, you know what I'm saying. I'm not sure how they verbalize that, but, you know, their whole thing is to portray being a man. I don't understand that. They went through all the trouble to extract themselves from the heterosexual community to be with the homosexual community only to relive the heterosexual [roles]."

Safe Words

"There is an understanding that comes with BDSM that a lot of people don't realize. Hollywood depicts the dominant and submissive role in BDSM play as something nonconsensual. There is nothing nonconsensual in this erotic arena. Matter of fact, the whole concept is based on consensual relationships between dominants and submissives. Hollywood will always screw around with it and make it seem like it is some psycho killer that gets off on it and likes to fuck their dead victims. It's nothing like that. The submissive has control, as it should be. In the discipline realm you can't do anything to your submissive if they don't give you permission to do it. Permission precedes submission."

Since the 1980s basic principles have been condensed into the motto "safe, sane and consensual" (SSC), which means that everything is based on safe, sane and consenting behavior of all involved parties. Its purpose is to make a clear, legal and ethical distinction between BDSM and crimes such as sexual assault or domestic violence. "Safe words" are often used to indicate when the submissive has reached his/her limit. When this word is said the dominant is to stop whatever act is currently happening.

Sex

"Erotic play (BDSM, S&M) is so not about sex," Ayo states. "Sex is involved because the whole concept of erotica is mentally arousing for a lot of people, but for the most point erotica is mental sex, if you will, but it's not actual sex. What I'm saying is that the focus is not sex; the focus is mental stimulation. That's the difference between porn and erotica. Erotica was never intended for sex, but it's just that horny people like myself, you know, when I start playing with a sub and whatnot it doesn't always start out as sex but by the time I finish doing what I'm doing, hey my pussy's wet and hey let's have…. So, there are times you have sex. Then you have those that get excited without it. They get a different type of satisfaction. It's a whole mental thing. I still haven't really figured out how to describe the satisfaction that they get."

Pain and Pleasure

Ayo admits, "It's involved. Pain and pleasure. Punishment. I do find pleasure in the punishing, but it's not really punishment. I make sure that they enjoy it too, so I'm not entirely sure it's considered punishment. Humiliation. Yeah. But not at the expense of crushing anyone's self esteem. I don't go that far, 'cause I do have limits. I like to be free, but as I say, too much freedom…too much of anything is not good for you. It is good to have some limitations, and I'm very disciplined. A lot of people don't have the understanding of what the art is of BDSM. It is an art like martial arts. Martial arts have this spirituality that you have to understand in order to learn the kata and perform. Bruce Lee has a mantra that he taught all his martial arts students: 'Absorb what is useful, discard what is useless, and add what is essentially your own.'" Words to live by.

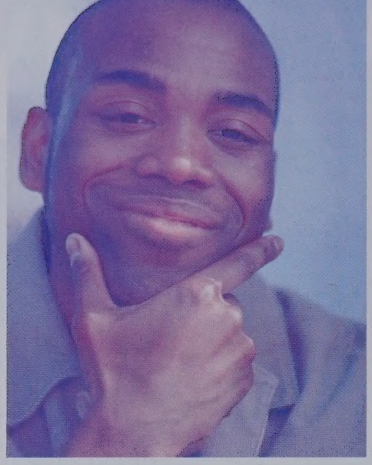
I asked Ayo if there is morality in BDSM. She said, "Just about anything that you do you must make a decision between right and wrong. So, yeah there's definitely morality, because you can kill someone if you don't know what you're doing."

When I asked Ayo how she became a dominatrix she supplied me with bits of her history in the BDSM world. "I guess dancing in the club and doing so many private parties," she said. "Private parties are anything goes and guys are really free, especially black men. Then after most of the hard guys leave, there's just a few of the mild guys left. It's usually right at the end of the party that the guys open up and want to try all these different things. They want you to whip them and smack them. This one guy liked to be slapped. That was interesting. That was the first time I ever slapped anyone. He liked being slapped, so it seemed like the harder I slapped him the harder his dick got. It was weird. It was weird at first because it was the first time I'd ever tried it but then after sitting and thinking about it I realized it kinda turned me on." Although Ayo has male clients, she prefers to be with women. "I love the fact that I'm a woman, and I love everything about me. I like breasts. I like pussy. I absolutely love it."

Black Lesbians

I asked how free she found black women in the LGBT community to be and Ayo answered passionately. "[Black lesbians] are the hardest people to free. You would think the gay community would be a lot more open to being free. They have escaped the prison of heterosexuality to be homosexual and live that lifestyle, and they come into this lifestyle [BDSM] just to put themselves back in a prison. I don't get it! They are the most prudish. That's why I don't have a girlfriend now. Prudish-ass women, soon as you say something that contradicts everything that they were taught, you know, it's like there's something wrong with me. Ain't nothing wrong with me; I'm living my life and you choose not to."

If you are interested in contacting Ayo her services are free. In her words, she does this as therapy to assist others in freeing themselves. You can contact Ayo, purchase her erotic CDs, or check out her blog radio show at www.newrelease.unconventionalwomaninc.com.



THE WAY I SEE IT

Words/Rob Smith

REMEMBER THE TIME

Memorial Day is upon us again, and since I'm a gay veteran one would think my column this month would be about the military. However, this year I have something else in mind. I've been thinking about a time before I was preoccupied with being as utterly fabulous as the next gay on the block. Let me explain.

I recently began traveling to different colleges and pride events speaking out about my experience with the military's Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT) policy, and my deployment to Iraq. As I visit cities and universities large and small, I find myself remembering the days when I didn't live in a place that was welcoming of gays. My first stop was in Pennsylvania, at a small college with an even smaller LGBT community, and what struck me was how brave most of the students are simply for being openly gay in a place that isn't exactly throwing pride parades down Main Street. It made me think of what it's like to be openly gay in Iowa or Oklahoma or any of the places that aren't typically thought to be gay. I mean, let's face it: It's a lot easier to be gay in New York City, Los Angeles or Atlanta than it is anywhere in Mississippi, or even Akron, Ohio, where I'm from.

What struck me the most about the students I interacted with was that they weren't concerned with being *fabulous*. They weren't concerned with carrying those man bags that everyone feels the need to have lately, or with having name-brand sunglasses on or with being seen at the hot party. They were just trying to live, to find themselves and become comfortable with their sexuality before they moved out into the larger gay community to start the desperately time-consuming process of trying to be better than everyone else. Some time between when we come to terms with our sexuality and when we start dealing with the overall gay community, we lose a bit of the time it takes to find ourselves—who we really are before we open to the messages and people dictating who they think we're supposed to be.

How wonderful would it be then, to spend that time between 14 and 22 or whenever it is that people are coming out nowadays, to be completely closed off to the ads for luxury brands that most of us can't really afford, or the ads for those gay party cruises that are filled with models with six-pack abs that are insanely hard to get. In that small town, I got a strong sense that these kids couldn't care less about any of that crap, and you know what? I kind of envied them.

Being around them made me remember the time when I was just trying to figure it out. Before I had to worry about having a "hot" body and what neighborhood I lived in and where I was spending my Friday and Saturday nights, I remember worrying about what it was that I was feeling inside. I remember worrying about what my family would think, whether I would ever be able to fall in love and have a boyfriend, and about whether I would ever be able to say who I was out loud, or be forced to hide it forever.

I write a lot about living in New York City. For my now mid-20-something self, it is fun, wild, crazy and exciting. But I wonder about who I would be right now if I weren't uniquely shielded from a lot of what passes for "culture" in the gay community during my formative years. Who would I be if I had been surrounded by the explosion of gay media that is now constantly telling us how to think, act and look and who we're supposed to be?

One of my best friends often teases me about being from Ohio. But why is it that no matter how much fun I have in New York City or Miami or Atlanta or wherever, I always think back to being a 17-year-old in my first gay club, Club X-Centricities in Sandusky, Ohio? It felt so fun and light to just twirl around on the dance floor, free to be my gay self for the first time in my life. In a way, I'm always remembering that time in my head. It was a time when I was free to be just me before having to worry about all the baggage, expectations and pressure that comes with being a gay man in this society, in this community.

Being around people who don't yet have that baggage and pressure makes me remember to try to not get caught up in all the things that have the potential to keep me dissatisfied and unhappy with life. When I start thinking about what I don't have, or maybe I should be accomplishing more, or maybe it's taking me far too long to complete the projects that are going to take me to the next level in my career, I have to force myself to think back to that time when I was happy to just *be*. When I do that, I know that yes, I'm exactly where I need to be and who I need to be *right now*, even if where I am isn't in the gayborhood or who I am has never worn Dolce & Gabbana *anything* in my life. So if you ever see me on the streets of New York City or at a pride event, college or university somewhere and I have a faraway look in my eyes, please don't mind me. I'm probably twirling.

Rob Smith is a freelance writer located in New York City. His work has appeared in USA Today, The Huffington Post, *and* AfterElton.com. *He is currently working on a memoir detailing his tenure as a gay soldier in the U.S. Army. He can be reached at robsmithvet@gmail.com and twitter.com/robsmithonline.*

DeMARCO MAJORS:
Man on a Mission

SWERV SWIMSUIT ISSUE

Words/Michael-Christopher
Photo/Emile Benjamin

Hair & Make-up/Yardé Noir
Styling/Jarmal Harris

Models: *DeMarco Majors & Latoya Buckner*

Graffiti swimsuit for men
Noral 2010
$60

Gold graffiti swimsuit for women
Noral 2010
$130

It takes a lot of stamina to run back and forth on a basketball court for 48 minutes, but DeMarco Majors, the former point guard for the San Francisco Rockdogs, is used to that kind of activity. Yes, he's got endurance, but it's his faith that gets him through all he's got going on and aspires to do. Majors is in the midst of fulfilling *all* of his dreams: to be an author, actor and television producer, all while helping people of color in the LGBT community.

Majors, originally from Evansville, Ind., saw more in his youth than a young man should see. The world around him was filled with crime, drugs and poverty, but he knew if he were to succumb to that life, he, his mother and two younger sisters would never survive. Evansville was a place that Majors had to escape and basketball was his ticket out.

Although he didn't get much time on the hardwood in high school, he still had love for the game and ate, slept and breathed b-ball. Because of his lack of game time, he was shocked to find that a coach from the Bay Area's Foothill Community College had been interested in him. During his freshman year at another college, he visited Foothill and met with the coach. By this time Majors had experienced a major growth spurt, gained a foot in his jumping ability, and was bigger than the point guards already there. The coach liked what he saw and got him to Los Altos Hills, Calif. "Never in my life had someone treated me like that," Majors explains. "People in my hometown told me, 'you're not going to play basketball, you're not good enough'...they used to laugh at me."

After college, Majors stayed in the Bay Area. To him, it was "a

completely different world," he says. "I'd never seen a gay person." By this time he knew he was attracted to men and struggled with feeling he was the only gay basketball player in the world. After some Internet research, he found a gym in San Francisco, in the heart of the Castro, where gay basketball leagues played. There he met some of the players who would join him in getting the Rockdogs back together, turning them into the champions they are today.

By 2007, Majors felt he'd done just about all he could in San Francisco. "The whole Bay Area for me was an opportunity for me to get over my past—all the shame, pain and hurt I endured while growing up and trying to transition into being a man, while never being taught what a man was," he says. After a trip to the Big Apple, he realized New York City held the next chapter of his life.

His prayers of getting into modeling, acting and basketball were answered the first three days after arriving in New York. But Majors says the city "beat me down. It didn't destroy me... I needed to be humbled. I went through hell my first year here." He experienced confusion about where his career was going, homelessness, and being drugged and held against his will for three weeks (something he's not quite ready to talk about in detail). However, that year did get him focused. While on the streets, he saw what people were driven to do just to survive. "I never knew what people really did in order to have a place to sleep at night," he says.

Majors witnessed the dark side of the LGBT community in the form of prostitution and drugs; many of the

Men's lion-brooched bikini
Renee France Designs
$70

Strapless, cut-out, one-piece swimsuit
Renee France Designs
$90

Black & white houndstooth swimsuit with pink shoulder ruffle
Evocative Designs
$200

Black & white striped bikini
Renee France Designs
$30

other people on the street were transgender and gay teens. The experience, however harrowing, was invaluable to Majors. "I was fighting for a community that I really didn't understand," he says. "I knew my broken foundation, but in order to understand others you have to get on the street—actually be in the street—in order to find out the needs. And then [you need] to be able to facilitate and help those needs. I was there."

Majors credits basketball and the Bible for leading him to modeling gigs all around the world—Australia, Argentina, New Zealand, Brazil and Hawaii—although Majors admits, "I don't get modeling." His family considered him a cute kid, but in school he was put down for being "funny looking" and poor. "It's so tough when you have to tear cardboard out of the trash to put in the bottom of your shoes so your sock won't get soaked," he says. But today, he's going to model calls because of his physique and positive attitude. By using his gifts, he says, "I can get them captivated [by] my true purpose. It opens doors so I can use my voice and penetrate to the right people who can actually make things happen."

The basketball star has made his way to the off-Broadway stage in the J.L. King production, *Raw*, where he took the audience into the mind of a straight man who was about to cheat on his woman. Majors is severely dyslexic, so memorizing his monologue was no easy task, but he figured, "I've conquered so many things before in my life; this is just another obstacle." He had the audience so rapt with his first-ever performance he received a standing ovation. Since then, he's had parts on *Law & Order* and will be the lead in a new series called *110 Percent* this fall. All he could say about the show was that we'd know about it very soon. He will also have a fitness show and a talk show called *LYTE: Living Your Truth on Embrace*, which will air on the up-and-coming Embrace network.

If that weren't enough, Majors is in the process of writing six books ranging from inspirational, motivational skills and a fiction trilogy tentatively titled *Pen Pals*. The trilogy begins around the time the Internet became prevalent and explores relationships of young gay men in different countries, with one living through civil war in the Czech Republic.

Despite being in four television productions and writing six books, Majors insists, "It's not about me. I'm actually doing this not to be famous, not to get a lot of money." Majors has a much higher calling and he's more than ready to answer. "I'm really here because I see things in the community that's going to destroy what a lot of people died for."

Black & pink trunks
Seven Deadly Sins Designs
$35

Pink V-neck ruffle swimsuit
Evocative Designs
$65

Day 1

Of my next treatment regimen: KALETRA once a day with my other HIV medicines.

Ask your doctor if KALETRA once daily is right for you.

KALETRA once daily should not be given to children. KALETRA once daily should not be taken with efavirenz (Atripla® and Sustiva®), nevirapine (Viramune®), amprenavir (Agenerase®), nelfinavir (Viracept®), carbamazepine (Tegretol® and Epitol®), phenobarbital (Luminol®), or phenytoin (Dilantin®). There may be a greater chance of getting diarrhea with the once daily regimen compared with the twice daily regimen.

Use

KALETRA® is a prescription anti-HIV-1 medicine called a protease inhibitor that contains lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to increase the chance of treatment response in people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) infection. It is not known if KALETRA is safe and effective in children under 14 days old.

KALETRA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing HIV-1 to others. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1.

KALETRA Safety Considerations

Do not take KALETRA® if you are allergic to any of its ingredients, including lopinavir or ritonavir. Do not take KALETRA with certain medicines, as they can cause serious problems, death, or make KALETRA less effective against HIV. Some patients taking KALETRA can develop inflammation of the pancreas and liver problems, which can cause death. Patients may develop changes in heart rhythm, large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol, diabetes, high blood sugar, changes in body fat, and/or increased bleeding in people with hemophilia. Some patients may develop signs and symptoms of serious infections they already have after starting anti-HIV medicines.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088 (1-800-332-1088).

If you cannot afford your medication, contact: www.pparx.org or call the toll-free number (1-888-4PPA-NOW) or (1-888-477-2669) for assistance.

For additional information about KALETRA, call 1-866-KALETRA (1-866-525-3872) or visit KALETRA.com.

Please see Brief Summary on adjacent pages.

KALETRA®
(lopinavir/ritonavir)

Model is for illustrative purposes only.

©2010 Abbott Laboratories Abbott Park, IL 60064
039-373185 April 2010 Printed in U.S.A.

KALETRA® (kuh-LEE-tra) (lopinavir/ritonavir) Tablets
KALETRA® (kuh-LEE-tra) (lopinavir/ritonavir) Oral Solution

CONSUMER BRIEF SUMMARY
CONSULT PACKAGE INSERT FOR FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION

MEDICATION GUIDE
Patient Information

Read the Medication Guide that comes with KALETRA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment. You and your doctor should talk about your treatment with KALETRA before you start taking it and at regular check-ups. You should stay under your doctor's care when taking KALETRA.

What is the most important information I should know about KALETRA?

KALETRA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Interactions with other medicines. It is important to know the medicines that should not be taken with KALETRA**. Read the section "What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?"
- **Changes in your heart rhythm and the electrical activity of your heart**. These changes may be seen on an EKG (electrocardiogram) and can lead to serious heart problems. Your risk for these problems may be higher if you:
  - already have a history of abnormal heart rhythm or other types of heart disease.
  - take other medicines that can affect your heart rhythm while you take KALETRA.

Tell your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms while taking KALETRA:

- dizziness
- lightheadedness
- fainting
- sensation of abnormal heartbeats

See the section below "What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?" for more information about serious side effects.

What is KALETRA?

KALETRA is a prescription anti-HIV medicine that contains two medicines: lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is called a protease inhibitor that is used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) infection. HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

It is not known if KALETRA is safe and effective in children under 14 days old.

Who should not take KALETRA?

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please see **"Can I take other medicines with KALETRA?" and consult with your doctor about all other medicines you take**.
- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir and lopinavir.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

KALETRA may not be right for you. Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- have any heart problems, including if you have a condition called Congenital Long QT Syndrome.
- have liver problems, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C.
- have diabetes.
- have hemophilia. People who take KALETRA may have increased bleeding.
- have low potassium in your blood.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if KALETRA will harm your unborn baby. Birth control pills or patches may not work as well while you take KALETRA. To prevent pregnancy while taking KALETRA, women who take birth control pills or use estrogen patch for birth control should either use a different type of birth control or an extra form of birth control. Talk to your doctor about how to prevent pregnancy while taking KALETRA.
- take KALETRA during pregnancy, talk with your doctor about how you can take part in an antiretroviral pregnancy registry. The purpose of the pregnancy registry is to follow the health of you and your baby.
- are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV-1. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby while taking KALETRA, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. If your baby does not already have HIV-1, there is a chance that HIV-1 can be passed to your baby through your breast milk.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Many medicines interact with KALETRA. Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your doctor or pharmacist. Your doctor can tell you if it is safe to take KALETRA with other medicines. Your doctor may need to change the dose of other medicines while you take KALETRA.

Medicines you should not take with KALETRA.

Serious problems or death can happen if you take these medicines with KALETRA:

- ergot containing medicines, including:
  - ergotamine tartrate (Cafergot®, Migergot, Ergomar, Ergostat, Medihaler Ergotamine, Wigraine, Wigrettes)
  - dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Embolex, Migranal®)
  - ergonovine, ergonovine and methylergonovine (Ergotrate, Methergine), ergotamine and methylergonovine
  - Ergotrate Maleate, methylergonovine maleate (Methergine)
- triazolam (Halcion®), midazolam hydrochloride oral syrup
- pimozide (Orap®)
- the cholesterol lowering medicines lovastatin (Mevacor®) or simvastatin (Zocor®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®) only when used for the treatment of pulmonary arterial

hypertension. (See "Medicines that may need changes" and "What are the possible side effects of Kaletra?" for information about the use of sildenafil for erectile problems.)
- alfuzosin (Uroxatral®)

Medicines that you should not take with KALETRA since they may make KALETRA not work as well:
- the herbal supplement St. John's Wort (hypericum perforatum)
- rifampin (Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®)

Medicines that may need changes:
- birth control pills that contain estrogen ("the pill") or the birth control (contraceptive) patches
- certain cholesterol lowering medicines, such as atorvastatin (Lipitor®) or rosuvastatin (Crestor®)
- certain other antiretroviral medicines, such as efavirenz (Atripla® and Sustiva®), nevirapine (Viramune®), amprenavir (Agenerase®), fosamprenavir calcium (Lexiva®) and nelfinavir (Viracept®)
- anti-seizure medicines, such as phenytoin (Dilantin®) carbamazepine, (Tegretol®), phenobarbital
- medicines for erectile problems, such as sildenafil (Viagra®, Revatio®), tadalafil (Cialis®), or vardenafil (Levitra®)
- medicines for tuberculosis (TB), such as rifabutin (Mycobutin®)
- inhaled steroid medicines, such as fluticasone propionate (Flonase®)
- inhaled medicines such as salmeterol (Serevent®) or salmeterol in combination with fluticasone propionate (Advair®). Your doctor may need to change to a different medicine
- medicines for gout, such as colchicine (Colcrys®)
- medicines to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH), such as bosentan (Tracleer®) or tadalafil (Adcirca®)

If you are not sure if you are taking a medicine above, ask your doctor.

How should I take KALETRA?

- Take KALETRA every day exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- It is very important to set up a dosing schedule and follow it every day.
- Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- Swallow KALETRA tablets whole. Do not chew, break, or crush KALETRA tablets.
- KALETRA tablets can be taken with or without food.
- If you are taking both Videx® (didanosine) and KALETRA:
  - didanosine can be taken at the same time as KALETRA tablets, without food.
  - take didanosine either one hour before or two hours after taking KALETRA oral solution.
- Do not miss a dose of KALETRA. This could make the virus harder to treat. If you forget to take KALETRA, take the missed dose right away. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Instead, follow your regular dosing schedule by taking your next dose at its regular time. Do not take more than one dose of KALETRA at one time.
- If you take more than the prescribed dose of KALETRA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.
- Take KALETRA oral solution with food to help it work better.
- If KALETRA is being used for your child, tell your doctor if your child's weight changes.
- KALETRA **should not** be given one time each day in children. When giving KALETRA to your child, give KALETRA exactly as prescribed.
- KALETRA oral solution contains a large amount of alcohol.
  - If a young child drinks more than the recommended dose, it could make them sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room right away.
  - Talk with your doctor if you take or plan to take metronidazole or disulfiram. You can have severe nausea and vomiting if you take these medicines with KALETRA.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. It is important not to run out of KALETRA. The amount of HIV-1 virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may become resistant to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- KALETRA can be taken with acid reducing agents used for heartburn or reflux such as omeprazole (Prilosec®) and ranitidine (Zantac®) with no dose adjustment.
- KALETRA should not be administered once daily in combination with carbamazepine (Tegretol® and Epitol®), phenobarbital (Luminol®), or phenytoin (Dilantin®).

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection. KALETRA does not stop you from passing HIV infection to others. Do not share needles, other injection equipment or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

KALETRA can cause serious side effects.
- See **"What is the most important information I should know about KALETRA?"**
- **Liver problems.** Liver problems, including death, can happen in people who take KALETRA. Blood tests in people who take KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these signs and symptoms of liver problems:
  - loss of appetite
  - yellow skin and whites of eyes (jaundice)
  - dark-colored urine
  - pale colored stools, itchy skin
  - stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **Inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis).** Some people who take KALETRA get inflammation of the pancreas which may be serious and cause death. You have a higher chance of getting pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain while taking KALETRA. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- **Increases in certain fat (triglycerides and cholesterol) levels in your blood.** Large increases of triglycerides and cholesterol can be seen in blood test results of some people who take KALETRA. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- **Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia).** Some people who take protease inhibitors including KALETRA get new or more serious diabetes, or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you notice an increase

in thirst or urinate often while taking KALETRA.

- **Changes in body fat.** Changes in body fat in some people who take antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- **Increased bleeding for hemophiliacs.** Some people with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors including KALETRA.
- **Increased risk of certain problems when you take medicines used for the treatment of erectile problems such as sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®), or vardenafil (Levitra®) with KALETRA:**
  - **low blood pressure.** If you get dizzy or faint, you need to lie down. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, or have fainting spells.
  - **vision changes.** Tell your doctor right away if you have vision changes.
  - **penis erection lasting more than 4 hours.** If you are a male and have an erection that lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

Common side effects of KALETRA include:

- diarrhea
- nausea
- stomach area (abdominal) pain
- feeling weak
- vomiting
- headache
- upset stomach

These are not all of the possible side effects of KALETRA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Tell your doctor about any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store KALETRA?

KALETRA tablets:

- Store KALETRA tablets at room temperature, between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C).
- Do not keep KALETRA tablets out of the container it comes in for longer than 2 weeks, especially in areas where there is a lot of humidity. Keep the container closed tightly.

KALETRA oral solution:

- Store KALETRA oral solution in a refrigerator, between 36°F to 46°F (2°C to 8°C). KALETRA oral solution that is kept refrigerated may be used until the expiration date printed on the label.
- KALETRA oral solution that is stored at room temperature (less than 77°F or 25°C) should be used within 2 months.
- Keep KALETRA away from high heat.

Throw away any medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need.

Keep KALETRA and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about KALETRA

KALETRA does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. Do not use KALETRA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give KALETRA to other people, even if they have the same condition you have. It may harm them.

This Medication Guide summarizes the most important information about KALETRA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for information about KALETRA that is written for health professionals. For more information about KALETRA call 1-800-633-9110 or go to www.KALETRA.com.

What are the ingredients in KALETRA?

Active ingredient: lopinavir and ritonavir

Inactive ingredients:

KALETRA 200 mg lopinavir and 50 mg ritonavir tablets: copovidone, sorbitan monolaurate, colloidal silicon dioxide, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The film coating contains: hypromellose, titanium dioxide, polyethylene glycol 400, hydroxypropyl cellulose, talc, colloidal silicon dioxide, polyethylene glycol 3350, yellow ferric oxide 172, and polysorbate 80.

KALETRA 100 mg lopinavir and 25 mg ritonavir tablets: copovidone, sorbitan monolaurate, colloidal silicon dioxide, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The film coating contains: polyvinyl alcohol, titanium dioxide, talc, polytheylene glycol 3350, and yellow ferric oxide E172.

KALETRA oral solution: acesulfame potassium, alcohol, artificial cotton candy flavor, citric acid, glycerin, high fructose corn syrup, Magnasweet-110 flavor, menthol, natural and artificial vanilla flavor, peppermint oil, polyoxyl 40 hydrogenated castor oil, povidone, propylene glycol, saccharin sodium, sodium chloride, sodium citrate, and water.

KALETRA oral solution contains 42.4% alcohol (v/v). "See How should I take KALETRA?".

KALETRA Tablets, 200 mg lopinavir/ 50 mg ritonavir
Manufactured by Abbott Pharmaceuticals PR Ltd., Barceloneta, PR 00617
for Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, IL 60064, U.S.A.

KALETRA Tablets, 100 mg lopinavir/ 25 mg ritonavir and KALETRA Oral Solution
Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, IL 60064, U.S.A.

2010, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

* The brands listed are trademarks of their respective owners and are not trademarks of Abbott Laboratories. The makers of these brands are not affiliated with and do not endorse Abbott Laboratories or its products.

Ref: 03-A363-R7

Revised: April, 2010

This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

036-377027 **MASTER**

Abbott

039-373135

HOW LONG SHOULD YOU WAIT TO SEX YOUR DATE?

Words/Yo Jeff, Hip Hop Dating Coach

"How long should I wait before sleeping with someone I'm dating?"

This question has a wide variety of answers that range from "it doesn't matter" to "90 days" all the way to "after marriage" (that is, if it's legal in your state). As common as this question is, the overabundance of answers leaves most people completely perplexed, not knowing what to do. Confusion and frustration aside, the timing of sex is very important to successful dating.

Unfortunately, there are people in the dating world who have less than good intentions; predators, if you will. These folks might say they're looking for a relationship, but in reality they are looking to get something you've got. This can include money, gifts, even a free meal. The worst-case scenario are those people who prey on your feelings, pretending to be emotionally invested, only to draw you into the bedroom for sex. You may be falling for this person and sadly find later that you're just another notch on that person's bedpost.

While researching the issue, the best advice I found didn't come from a doctor or sex therapist or even Steve Harvey. It was reformed pickup artist Neil Strauss, whose book *Rules of the Game* inspired the answer. No one gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual or transgender should have sex with someone until they receive the most valuable gift one can give: Respect. Here are some ways you can gauge if the person you are dating has respect for you.

Values your time—Is your date always late? Are you always on his or her schedule?

Values your opinion—While in conversation, does your friend honor your point of view or are they always right? Does your date come to you with important decisions or ask your advice?

Continued next page

Responsive—Does your friend return your phone calls, texts or e-mails in a timely manner?

Attentive—When you're out, is your date constantly texting or taking calls? Are they letting you get a word in edgewise? Are you their main concern or are their eyes wandering?

Upfront with feelings/communicative—Does your friend willingly and comfortably let you know how he or she feels about you, where your relationship is going and what they ultimately want?

Concerned about your safety and welfare—They say chivalry is dead, but if your date walks you to your car, waits until you've gotten inside before driving off, or calls to see you've made it home safely, that one might be a keeper!

Now, if you're constantly finding you are being disrespected, you may have to look within. Are you being the type of person that people want to respect? People generally respect those who are honest, open, have a positive attitude; who stand up for themselves and who respect themselves and others. Being shady, catty or overly flirtatious is not going to get you very far in the dating arena.

As author of the "Playa Hater List," which helps people avoid gold diggers and pickup artists, and the "Hip Hop Dating Codes," which teaches you how to date effectively, I teach two main rules of thumb to protect you and the person you're dating: No sex on the first date and define the relationship before hitting the sheets. When you know more about the type of person you're dealing with, clearly define the relationship with your partner. Is the relationship intimate, boyfriend/girlfriend or NSA—No Strings Attached? Players don't like clarity. Leaving it vague gives them an easy out after sleeping with someone, so it could be a red flag if they resist "labeling" the relationship. And what if you're the one who wants to keep it casual? You still need to spell that out to your partner.

Does this mean you *can't* have sex on the first date? By all means, do what your heart feels, but there are a few things to be aware of: STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), and if you're bisexual, pregnancy. Many sexually transmitted infections and diseases have no symptoms right away. Merely looking at your partner is not an effective method of gauging one's health. In recent studies, 46% of African-American men who have sex with men tested HIV-positive and 48% of African-American women tested have herpes. Basically, your chances of running into an STD, regardless of gender or orientation, is about 50/50. Those are pretty high odds so be sure to always use condoms or dental dams when with an unknown partner.

Keep in mind that some people who are HIV-positive disclose their status up front while others wait until they feel more comfortable with their dates. Letting your hormones take control could get you in a situation you didn't want to be in, whether your are negative *or* positive. Even some poz people may not want to be exposed to other strains of the HIV virus. In addition, it's even more important for HIV-positive people to steer clear of STDs. So no matter whom you're sleeping with, ask the right questions and protect yourself.

Also remember, it's *very* risky to spend the night with someone you just met, and the old saying "hindsight is 20-20" definitely applies. Hooking up with people off the Internet and cruising in parks has become more dangerous than ever before, and it's not just because of the health risks. There have been more murders and robberies related to hookups originating on sex sites and in cruise parks than ever before. Criminals have begun using these venues, setting up unwitting victims. So, if this is your thing, be sure to send the hookup's information to a friend and don't cruise alone. It could save your life.

When on vacation, spring break and at LGBT events and trips, heightened endorphins can cloud your judgment—so don't just blame it on the alcohol. Giving yourself an extra day to experience the person when their "mojo" is off may allow you to pick up on things, positive or negative, that can assist in your decision to have sex. Let your body and mind get back to normal so you can better assess if and when to have sex with someone, especially if you've been drinking. Instead, spend your first night meditating on what you've learned about that person and whether you're both on the same page.

So now you've decided to wait to sex your date but you're finding it difficult to resist your new boo. Try changing your dating times and location—dating doesn't have to be at night. Trade in that dark, romantic restaurant for afternoon activities like street fairs, matinees and picnics. Also, avoid the "home date." These days, folks are opting out of spending lots of money on wining and dining, but raging hormones, privacy and a nearby bedroom make for a bad mix when trying to resist sexual temptation. Avoiding the home date may save you plenty of heartache.

Sex is a very important part of bonding in relationships. It is vital not to take it for granted, or to think that sex is just a physical activity. We humans are not only physical beings, we have spirits as well. No matter what your religion or culture is, if you don't respect the act of sex, you risk learning the power of spiritual connection—catching feelings—*the hard way*. You can also end up in a relationship with someone who whipped you sexually but abuses you emotionally. People who underestimate the act of sex often find themselves in these types of imbalanced relationships. So have safe sex and smart sex.

Feel free to holla at me with comments or questions at coachyojeff@gmail.com.

The Spirit Within

Words/Rev. James Watson

We are all spiritual beings first. That's the bottom line. That means before you began to identify as being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or even heterosexual, before you were male or female, you were intentionally connected in and through the Creator. Your foundation (Spirit) was transported or "moved" into human-ness. However, it was not displaced or otherwise disconnected from the Creator. It was simply given a physical shape for which to be expressed.

It is this expressive nature from within that gives cause to the inside voice, your Spirit. So what does this mean, you're wondering? It boils down to this: Everything about the you that you grew up to be was determined before you made your earthly debut. Believe it or not, your very desires and wants are fashioned at the Spirit level prior to you ever giving a voice to them. The Spirit is the conduit of creative flow that provides the canvas from which your self-portrait emerges. The distinction comes in developing this self-portrait.

Your self-portrait represents the core aspects of your being. How you see yourself draws upon the inward expression radiating through the Spirit. You develop your style and course in life based on the Spirit, even when you're not acutely aware that you're doing it. It's not always as simple as stated here, and yes, there are trial and error periods. But nonetheless, Spirit will remain in place until you reconnect to it. Think of an episode in your life that resulted in you making choice after choice, only to realize that the first choice was the only real choice that made any sense or felt right. All of that was the result of Spirit influencing you initially; however, from experiences, past situations or other influences, you decided to try something else. So you ask yourself, if Spirit is "all that," then why the difficulties in life? Why the challenges?

You have what is called "free will." Free will means you can select when, how and if you even want to heed Spirit. You can also choose to "select human" and the experiences that come with that. The choice is yours. How does one select human? Every time you are driven by looks, fashion, instant reactions or how an experience made you feel—the externals of life—you're selecting human. This does not mean that Spirit is not involved; it just means the influence for you came from outside of Spirit. And although you had free will to make that selection or choice, Spirit ultimately will nudge you in the correct direction.

Ever had a situation where you made a choice and jumped in head first, ready and willing to do whatever to make it work, but somehow or another it just didn't feel totally right? You felt something was missing or you needed more? That feeling was the result of the process within trying to reconcile your choice with the Spirit's true aspect for you.

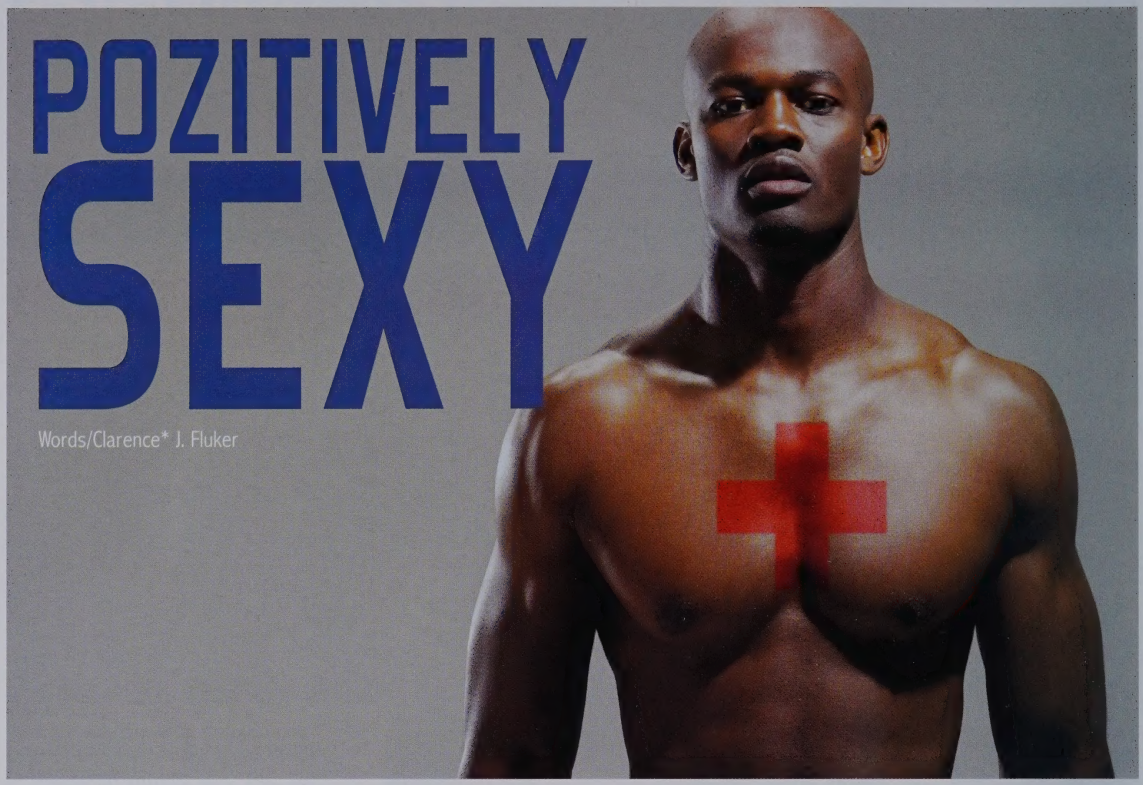
On the flip side, you can also make a choice that is in total concert with Spirit. And you know how that feels. Everything is smooth, energized; you feel connected (go figure), you may even feel invincible. See, when your choice is in concert with Spirit, you have simply allowed the spirit-process of influence to be the guide and director. You no longer feel the anxiety swelling in your heart; your mind's not racing with doubts, worries, what ifs; and you can even rest in the moment. As the saying goes, "smooth sailing."

With all that said, how do you know that it truly works? How can you experience the Spirit within? What proof do you have that Spirit even exists? You

Continued on page 27

POZITIVELY SEXY

Words/Clarence* J. Fluker



He is 6 feet 4 inches, 210 pounds of golden and toned desire. When he walks into the room gay men want to be with him, and straight men want to be him. Everything about him draws him closer to you. His kisses are so passionate and deep, they could be likened to the U.S. military strategy of shock and awe; spectacular displays of dominance and force. He exudes confidence and sex appeal. He is sexy.

He is also living with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. While everyone knows that he is sexy, few people know his status, and he plans to keep it that way. He thinks that people knowing that he is HIV-positive will have a negative impact on the way he is viewed sexually—and he isn't alone in his belief.

The gay community and public health organizations often promote dialogue about being tested, knowing one's status and taking care of your physical health if you test positive. Yet rarely do we talk about how men see themselves as sexual beings and how they navigate a sex life with old and new sex partners and lovers.

Ricky, a black gay man living in Los Angeles, first learned that he was HIV-positive seven years ago. Initially, he says he went through a number of emotions as he thought about the totality of his life, how it once was and how it would be lived moving forward. When he thought about himself as a sexual being he said, "I felt inhuman, felt contaminated, felt undesirable and ashamed. Initially, I never wanted to have sex again." Ricky added, "Although my outward appearance did not change, I *felt* unattractive, and undesirable."

His voice echoes that of Andre from Dallas, Texas who said that when he learned he was HIV-positive three years ago, he believed no one would ever want him as a partner, or he would only have the option of dating and having sex with men that were also HIV-positive. Andre observes that the list of preferred qualities and characteristics of what is considered the "ideal" man in the black gay community includes the body beautiful, well financed and masculine—and HIV-negative. He believes the community is often being blind or dumb to the fact that such a high number of its own are living with HIV, known to them or not. HIV is a reality.

Andre felt damaged because of the stereotype about people living with HIV: that they weren't desired, or that because of the medications their looks would fade. "Men are very visual creatures and that's where the initial attraction comes from," he says. Andre has always been considered very handsome and is very cognizant of his outward appearance. After his diagnosis, he immersed himself in books and journals about the virus and its side effects, and started talking at great length with doctors and friends who knew more about the disease and people who were HIV-positive who looked healthy and lived rich, full lives. He concluded that the disease is no different from having any other disease or medical condition as long as he took care of himself and treated it properly. Andre also concluded that the stereotypes and unflattering images weren't true or fair—and more importantly, not at all who he was and was determined to be.

Andre and Ricky's fears of how they would be treated by other men in a sexual context aren't totally unfounded. It is not atypical to come across an Internet personal ad in which some-

one spells out in no unspecific terms that they aren't interested in hooking up with, having sex with or dating a man that is HIV-positive. "I respect those who state that they do not want to mess around with someone who is poz," Ricky says. "It's just the way you say it that counts."

"People refer to it as the 'package' or they'll say he got the 'sauce,' the 'nasty woman's disease'... [those are] just a few of the names I have heard and that have offended me," Ricky says. "Words can be very hurtful. I felt ugly initially. That changed as I became aware of others who were also poz, and who I thought were sexy as hell. Then as people continued to compliment me or say I was sexy or looked good, I started believing and feeling that to be true too, despite my status. I also began to go within and find a place of strength and comfort."

There is no rulebook that guides how one deals with the fear of rejection or being judged as a sexually active HIV-positive man, particularly around the issue of disclosing HIV status. Andre and Ricky both admit that they do not disclose their HIV status to men with whom they are only having casual sex. With casual sex partners they insist on wearing condoms and limiting oral sex, if they engage in it at all. They do this to be as safe as possible, to not expose their partner to the virus during intercourse. Ricky refers to it as a "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Ricky and Andre find themselves confident and certainly appealing enough to pull men, yet there is more involved if they choose to keep whom they pull in, perhaps because keeping a man requires a different kind and another layer of confidence, discretion and trust.

Ricky says, "If I am interested in establishing more than a casual sexual relationship, then I would disclose. I have tried disclosing up front in all cases, and I have had it to backfire on me." Since his diagnosis Ricky has been in several long-term relationships. While he prefers that his long-term relationships be with other positive men, not all of them have been and those men were aware of his status. He believes that disclosure is the most difficult thing for him to do when seriously getting to know someone, but he knows that it's essential. Because of his apprehension of disclosing there have been instances when Ricky decided not to approach some men, and others when he has purposefully avoided men who have tried to pursue him.

Andre was in a long-term relationship when he first learned his status and remained with his partner for two years afterward. He found some initial comfort in already being in a relationship when he learned his status but when it ended and he entered the dating world again, he felt some of the same anxiety that Ricky did. He, like Ricky, has had both good and bad experiences after disclosing. HIV may not change how a person views himself as sexy, but it can change how someone else views them.

If you ask a dozen people to define the word sexy you would probably get a dozen different answers. Andre says that he sees sexy as "a person's aura, attitude, behavior and confidence. Sexy is more than physical attributes." It is also more than one's HIV status. One day that 6 feet four inch brother—and the rest of the world—will fully embrace that idea, too.

The Spirit Within

Continued from page 25

make life choices and the consequences can go from good to painful, and everything in between. You can feel abandoned because of your choices or you can choose to cave into peer pressure to keep the peace.

One word: faith. Faith is that which leads you to reach for what you desire, to know it is yours, and that the good in life is unconditional. Faith is also tied to trust. Yet we may have come to realize our faith through our religious walk in life, which seemed conditional based on religious teachings or impressions. See, along with trust, faith *should* be tied to Spirit. The same Spirit (within) that knows your desires can guide you toward the good in life, and remains unconditional. Somehow along the way faith, through tailored religious teachings, has been based on human interpretation. It has become a conditional relationship. If you choose this, your faith will do this. If your faith is not right, then this will happen. Ask yourself, through this faith experience, how did you feel? Were there questions, doubts and anxiety tied to your choices in life? Did you find the answers? Where's the Spirit in this?

Mind you, not all religious teachings or environments are so human in concept that you feel emptied of any connection. It's just that you may have experienced that in your Spirit you knew there was something else.

Place your faith in Spirit. Remember, Spirit is the foundation of your core being. It holds the key to your desires and wants and that which is good for you. So your faith now becomes a Spirit-filled experience with unconditional measure. Any questions, doubts or even anxiety is answered through Spirit. You simply need to apply faith. Your course in life will be without condition. It will be your life as deemed and guaranteed by Spirit.

Recall that canvas for which to reveal your self-portrait. Well, through faith, you can tap into the guarantee that Spirit will be a part of your self-expression. Your walk in life, your style, even who you are along with what you are will be engaged through faith in Spirit. And as a spiritual being initially, everything about you was designed at the beginning. Your faith will allow for each and every connection through Spirit. The magical moment is when you can freely realize from within. Everything is already in place. You simply have to abide by the Spirit within.

No matter what the expressive nature of your being conveys to the world, it is yours to do so. Why? Simply because of the Spirit within. Just like Beethoven was a gifted composer, whose gift was enveloped in Spirit and developed through experience; your expression, be it lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, even heterosexual, is a gift that is a part of the very Spirit that connects you to the Creator. Live it! Express it! Be the "I am" that your Spirit has determined you to be!

IN THE ZONE

Words/Del Hornbuckle

As mobile devices (iPhones, Droids or basic feature mobile phones) become more central to our experience, we've become an "app-savvy" LGBT nation. We tweet, vibrate alerts, text ad nauseam, check a friend's location via FourSquare, and post to Facebook on the regular.

Wireless technology will continue to evolve, and downloadable mobile applications will account for the largest share of consumer software in coming years. The added value of mobile apps (anytime/anywhere access, ability to pinpoint locations, social networking, and instant information) is especially useful for the LGBT community. Apps can easily give us opportunities to stay connected, find and attend LGBT events, support advocacy efforts, and tap into LBGT-owned or friendly businesses and services.

Here are some apps you shouldn't live without for the iPhone, iTouch, iPad and for Droid devices.

Edge Gay News Reader

www.edgeiphone.com

EDGE (Edge Publications, Inc.) is by far the most successful LGBT iPhone app, offering the largest compilation of local LGBT news and entertainment portals in the world. Their excellent business directory includes where to eat, drink, stay and party with EDGE's list of community-maintained, LGBT-friendly businesses in major cities across the country. Price $0.99

GayCities

www.gaycities.com/iphone/

GayCities lists over 200 cities worldwide and includes reviews, recommendations and photos from fellow travelers; and a customizable feature to share where you are and what you are doing. Instantly access shopping, bars, gym locations, and streetmaps with OpenStreetMap software. Free

House Music Channel (HMC)

http://www.housemusicchannel.com/

Ready for your anytime/anywhere House groove? BB Media Global Group announced the first House music app in April 2010 that delivers "25 years of global dance culture" and the best dance DJs from around the world. The app also includes a blog and Twitter updates, videos, interviews and DJ mixsets. Life! Love! House! Free

HRC Buying for Equality Guide

http://www.hrc.org/buyersguide2010/

Support businesses that support us with the Human Rights Campaign's Buying for Equality Guide mobile app. Brands and products from businesses that support LGBT equality are rated using HRC's Corporate Equality Index (www.hrc.org/cei). Free

Out Radio—Gay Internet Radio

http://bit.ly/9ChaSe

Listen to live radio shows that cover LGBT lifestyle-oriented topics. The programs cover sports, music, politics, business and arts and entertainment. Nationally syndicated shows, interviews with prominent guests and commentary, and even college programs are featured. Free

Ambiance

http://ambiance.urbanapps.com/

Urban Apps describes the Ambiance App as an "environment enhancer" designed to help you create the perfect ambient atmosphere to focus or relax. The choices are in the hundreds: sounds that block the drama—rainfall, wind, white noise, rainforest sounds, etc. The best app for some R&R. Price $0.99

Houzz

http://www.houzz.com/iphone

Here's design ideas at your fingertips. Houzz has the largest database of home design ideas; you can search photos via location, style and type of room and build a virtual design book—so toss the scrapbook of cutouts from design magazines! Photos can be saved for offline access; sign up for weekly design tips and ideas. Free

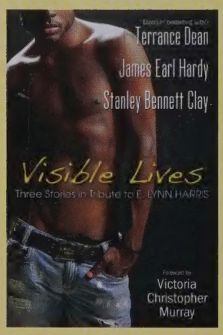
Sexy Slots

http://bit.ly/azmyXk

I end this roundup with a fun dating/flirting mobile app. Sexy Slots by Tessera Design is a lot of fun and easy to enjoy. Press play and get ready for the Sexy Slot Machine of Love. This app has a straight and an LGBT option. Price $0.99

BOOKS

Honoring E. Lynn Harris



In July 2009 the world mourned the passing of E. Lynn Harris. Harris, whose novels about successful and glamorous black men with sexual identity conflicts (and the women and men who love them) was one of the nation's most popular writers. Now three of his friends—writers Terrance Dean, James Earl Hardy and Stanley Bennett Clay—have come together to produce *Visible Lives*, a powerful tribute to Harris.

Published by Dafina Books in June 2010, *Visible Lives* features three novellas: *The Intern* (Dean), *Is It Still Jood to Ya?* (Hardy) and *House of John* (Clay). *New York Times* bestselling author Zane calls *Visible Lives* "a creative way to pay homage to a writer who paved the way for so many authors."

In *The Intern*, workaholic television executive Chase Kennedy finds himself drawn to the office's new intern, sexy college student and basketball star Quincy Thornberry. Things couldn't be going better until Chase learns that Quincy's father may be the man he lost both his virginity and his heart to years prior. In *Is It Still Jood to Ya?*, actor Raheim Rivers is anxious to be reunited with his lover Mitchell Crawford after being away a long time. Uncertain about the future of their relationship, Raheim and Mitchell are forced to confront their issues and each other when a summer blackout strands them together in New York. Lastly, in *House of John*, Jesse Templeton, a 38-year-old freelance photographer, is still reeling from a recent breakup with his live-in boyfriend Sean. He thinks he's done with love—until he starts falling for a gorgeous local at an annual sex retreat in the Dominican Republic.

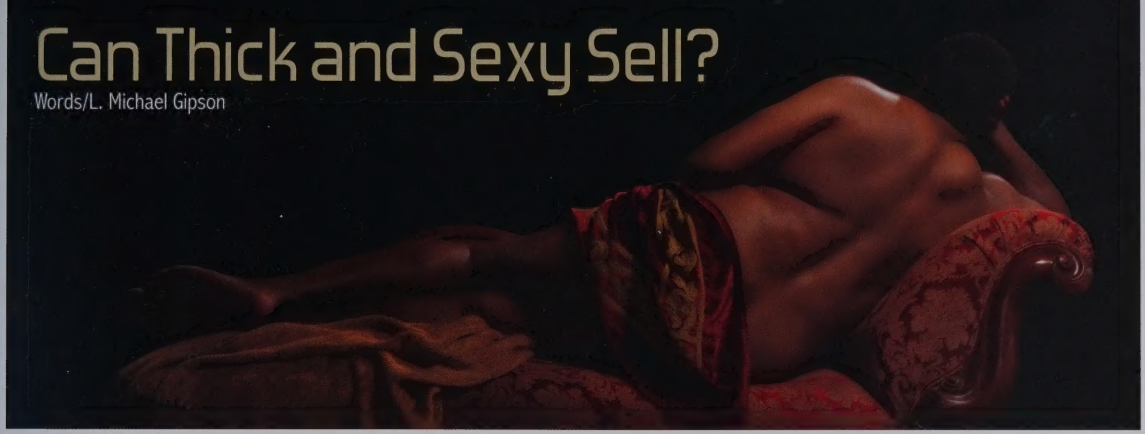
Terrance Dean is the author of the memoir *Hiding in Hip Hop* and *Reclaim Your Power!*. He has worked in the entertainment industry for many years as a producer and is the founder/creator of Men's Empowerment, Inc.

James Earl Hardy was born and raised in Brooklyn and is an honors graduate of Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. He is the author of the bestselling *B-Boy Blues* series, including *Love the One You're With* and *A House Is Not a Home*. His first short story collection, *The Freak Filez: An Erotic Anthology*, was released in spring 2010.

Stanley Bennett Clay is the author of *Diva*, *In Search of Pretty Young Black Men* and *Looker*. A former editor for both *Black Beat* and *SBC Magazine*, he is also an award-winning playwright and actor.

Can Thick and Sexy Sell?

Words/L. Michael Gipson



It was happening at last. My debut book of short stories, *Collisions: A Collection of Intersections*, is being released and today I'm getting the proposed cover art. With high anticipation I click open my designer's layout to observe the chocolate eight-pack and lean physique of my cover model. I immediately frown. Something isn't right. I find myself wincing, not because the dark brother isn't hot—he is suitably edible—but because the image he presents is so cliché, and I only do cliché for satire.

Check the shelves of the ever rarer gay bookstores and observe the covers of some of our most prominent black gay authors, and you will believe you're looking at a series of Calvin Klein ads for Rod 2.0. Not that the veiny, hungry men inside the pages look much different than their cover models. Sex in print sells and many business-minded black gay authors aim to deliver.

And why shouldn't they? For decades white gay authors wrote hundreds of tomes about the beautiful alabaster Davids filling mythical versions of Chelsea, The Castro, Fire Island and West Hollywood. Black gays desperate for reflections of themselves in literature were once forced to read the work of Armistead Maupins and Larry Kramers after exhausting dog-eared copies of books by James Baldwin, Joseph Beam, Assotto Saint and Essex Hemphill. That is, until authors like E. Lynn Harris, James Earl Hardy, Lee Hayes and a bevy of commercial black gay writers became the pulp fiction equivalents of Sidney Sheldon, Jackie Collins and Harold Robbins—all with escapist tales filled with characters of fame, beauty and wealth far removed from the stark urban terrains of their dominant readership. Even writers trying to capture something weightier than *Dynasty* felt compelled to drape their literature in boys of traditional model physiques, from Darieck Scott to Michael "*UnSpeakable*" Christopher, the editor-in-chief and publisher of *SWERV*.

While it may not have been true for the above mentioned writers, I know for me and a bevy of literary marketing journalists there is a cynical calculus that goes into the equation of selling black books regardless of sexual orientation: Make it brightly colorful, cartoonish, naked, lewd looking enough to move urban readers from apathy to purchase. Supposedly this is proven through market research and the *ka-ching* from couch potatoes sitting alone at home on a Saturday night aching for vicarious rides on the beautiful ones' adventures, lives they supposedly can never have.

Looking at my cover I knew the image would sell, and like any writer I want as many readers as possible to pick up my work. I wanted to be a pure flesh-peddling capitalist for once and enjoy the profits from my art. The only thing was that there was this holographic angel on my shoulder reminding me of an uncomfortable truth: I am that couch potato sitting at home on a Saturday night overindulging in escapist fare. And most of the people I know who regularly buy books are too, so why not affirm them for a change? Then the crummy bastard just wouldn't shut up, reminding me that the un-ironic beefcake wasn't particularly reflective of the wide range of bodies and sizes of men who people my work.

So a conversation was had with my publisher, Tim'm T. West, and my web guru, J Brotherlove. Together, we concocted and promoted the "Thick and Sexy Cover Model" contest on the RedDirt.biz site to invite men of size—from muscular thick to bear—to send in a pic for web votes, resulting in an ultimate winner to grace and sell my yarns.

There was only one caveat: the pic had to be of a naked torso with arms parted, view unencumbered. Not the cut off at the shoulder, amber-gauzed headshot or glamour shot readymade for *Black Hair*. No muscle-flexed arm-crossed poses that artificially enhance your musculature (yes, we know that move too, ghurl; who do you think invented it?). No, for once the bigguns were being asked to be proud of their midsections, just as they are, and not rely on that "pretty face" that regularly backhands us thick ones under the guise of compliments.

Only thing was that many of the cowards submitted them that way anyway, despite painstaking instructions. While I'm eternally grateful to the minority of big brave hearts who followed our request to the tee, the majority made me wonder whether I was barking up the wrong tree. Does the "thick and sexy" man even believe he's thick and sexy enough to be affirmed on a nationally selling book? Hell, on anything more than a sex site? Or is that privilege only for those whose waist is my thigh?

For my esteem, and my business, I need to believe my thick brothers can believe that we're sexy enough for us. Fuck society. Fuck the community. Can we believe we're sexy enough for ourselves? As someone who struggles daily with my size, I get insecurity and episodic shame. But, as a writer who's banking the sale of his baby on the belief that somewhere within we unapologetically want to be affirmed and reflected in our media and our stories, I have to believe we feel we're worth every privilege bestowed upon the classically beautiful. My livelihood, and the future marketing calls of other observing, "hand-tied" booksellers who'd maybe follow my little social experiment, may depend on your answer.

June 5, 2010 / 8th Annual CrabFest Beach Party and GayPride
Join Lez Party for a weekend of beautiful women, great food and wonderful California sunshine at Twin Lakes State Beach Santa Cruz.
Contact: paulette@lezpartynow.com/stephanie@lezpartynow.com
www.lezpartynow.com

June 12, June 25-27, 2010 / Harlem Pride
Come celebrate our beautifully diverse LGBT & SGL community in Harlem and the organizations and allies that support us. Live entertainment, vendors, music, dancing and health and wellness information.
E-mail: info@harlempride.org
www.harlempride.org

June 23, 2010 / Soulful Summer Soirée
Join Black Coalition on AIDS at Rasselas Jazz Club and Restaurant in San Francisco as they honor outstanding community members for their dedication and support.
www.bcoa.org

July 1-4, 2010 / Body Boyz United
The sexiest all-male Las Vegas circuit party event of the summer! Events include Sexy Boxers & Briefs Party, Fitness & Water Games Party, Temptation Sundays Pool Party and The All-White 4th of July Party.
Contact: 800-785-4856, e-mail: bodyboyzunited@yahoo.com
www.bodyboyzunited.com

July 8-11, 2010 / Diamonds and Pearls Female Weekend
Treaz'ure (Los Angeles) and Urban Elle (Oakland) have teamed up to bring you a fabulous weekend of fun and pleasure. Take part in the talent night meet and greet, Treaz'ure breakfast club, pool party and picnic.
Contact: skylar_publishing@yahoo.com
www.treazuremag.com

July 17, 2010 / 2010 White Attire Affair - "The Garden of Envy"
Al Sura, Inc., whose mission is to improve communication, education and awareness of HIV/AIDS within the African-American community, holds its annual event in Washington D.C. this summer. Featured performers include R&B artists Tamika "love" Jones, Rayshun LaMarr, LB Muzac, spoken word artists SolSis, CooLots and rapper Bry'NT.

August 13-15, 2010 / Fire Island Black Out
This year marks the 8th year of this unique beach experience in Fire Island, N.Y. Enjoy the live entertainment, swimwear fashion show, volleyball tournament, best beach tent contest, poetry slam and the Bump & Dip Dance and Pool Party.
www.fireislandblackout.com

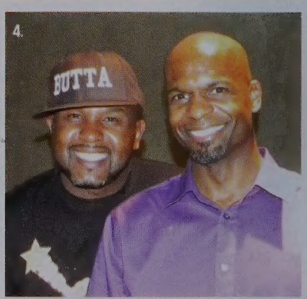
* BLACK PRIDES *for more information visit www.ifbprides.org*

Albany, NY June 4 - 6	Orlando, FL June 4 - 8	Los Angeles, CA July 2 - 4	Buffalo, NY July 23 - 25	Indianapolis, IN August 6 - 8
Newark, NJ June 8 -14	Albany, NY Black & Latino Gay Pride June 5 - 7	Chicago, IL June 30 - July 5	Toronto, Ontario, Canada July 29 - August 2	Norfolk, VA August 13 -15
Boston, MA June 10 - 13	Chicago, IL Latino Pride Orgullo En Accion Latino June 13	Charlotte, NC July 16 -18	Raleigh/Durham, NC July 29 - August 1	St. Louis, MO August 13 -15
New Orleans, LA June 10 - 13	Columbia, SC June 24 - 27	Detroit, MI July 20 - 25	Oakland, CA July 30 - August 1	Atlanta, GA September 3 - 6
Portland, OR June 11- 15	London, England UK June 24	Little Rock, AR July 23 - 25	Rochester, NY August 6 - 8	Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN September 9 - 12
Memphis, TN June 17 - 20		Pittsburgh, PA July 23 - 25	Jacksonville, FL August 6 - 8	South Africa September 29 - October 3

ON THE SCENE

Brown Sugah Bash presents A Night of Comedy with Karen Williams. 1. Comedian Karen Williams with the women of BSB. 2. Karen Williams killing the crowd. 3. BSB members & guests. 4. Opening act Butta Fly Soul with SWERV Editor-in-Chief Michael-Christopher.

Photos courtesy of Brown Sugah Bash



TRAXX ATLANTA & TRAXX GIRLS
presents

PURE HEAT 2010

ATLANTA'S BLACK GAY PRIDE WEEKEND CELEBRATION

PURE ENERGY ★ PURE SENSATION ★ PURE ECSTASY

Thursday, September 2nd – Monday, September 6th

DISCOUNTED VIP PASSES ARE ON SALE NOW!

NATIONAL RECORDING ARTISTS ★ FABULOUS VENUES ★ WORLD RENOWN DJ'S ★ INSANE EVENTS ★ 5 STAR HOTELS

"It Can't Get Any Hotter Then This!"

LOEWS
ATLANTA
HOTEL

TRAXX ATLANTA's & TRAXX GIRLS'
5 STAR HOST HOTEL
1065 Peachtree Street, NW
Atlanta, GA 30309

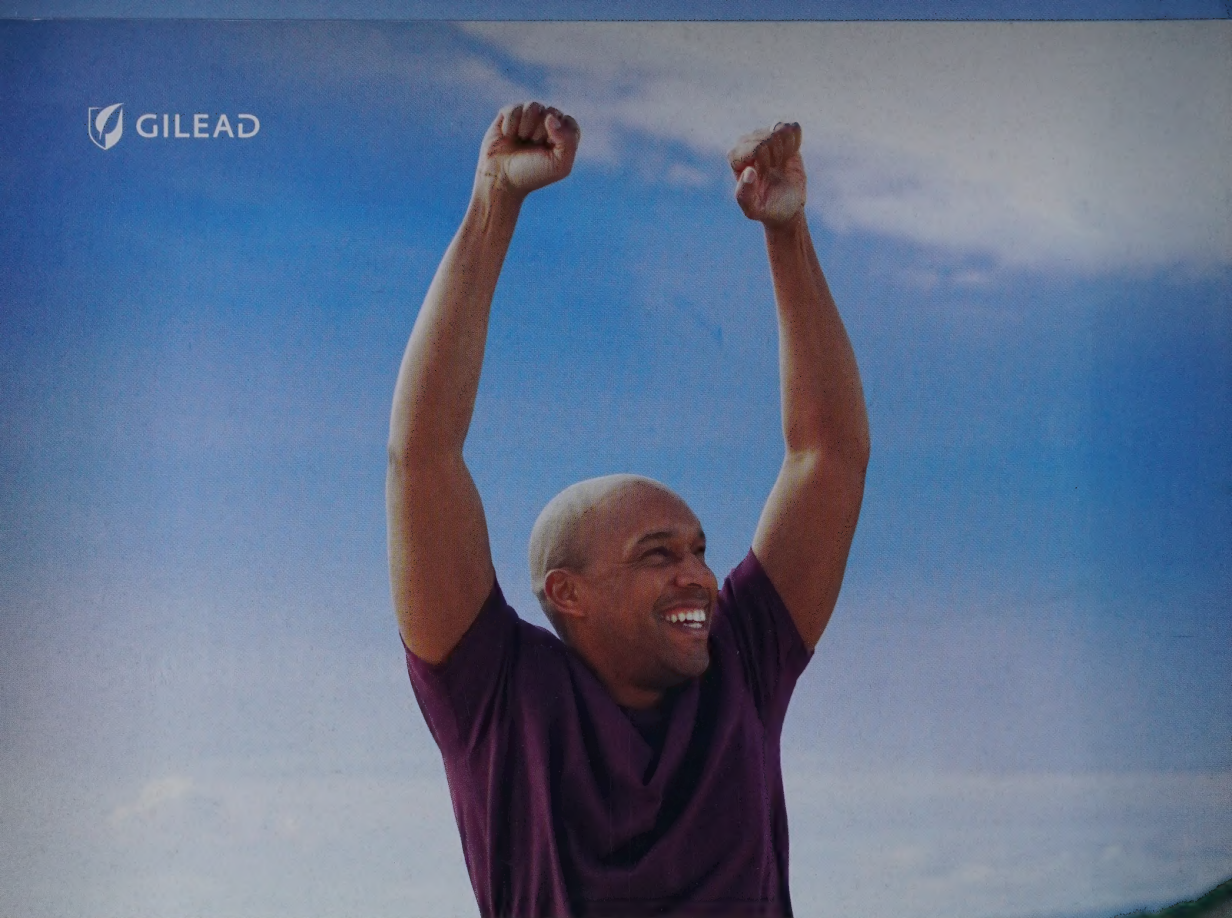
BOOK YOUR ROOM NOW!

Room Rate Per Night: $119.00

Toll Free Reservation #: (888)563-9736 ask for "2010 Atlanta Pride"
Weblink: www.loewshotels/atl Reservation Code: TG1901

For More Info: **www.atlantaprideweekend.com**

www.twitter.com/PUREHEAT2010 www.pureheatlanta.com www.traxxatlanta.com (866)602-5553



By starting HIV treatment, I went from living in shame to standing up and taking control.

HIV TREATMENT IS POWER

If you're HIV positive, the decision to begin taking medication can be difficult. But it can be the first step toward reclaiming your life and living longer. Talking to your doctor and getting the right information on HIV treatment can help take you from feeling ashamed to feeling in control.

Take the next step and go to
hivtreatmentispower.com or call **(877) Y-TREAT-HIV**

©2009 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. PT0560B 03/09

swerv

culture & community

FREE

FALL 2010

CELEBRATING OUR WOMEN

MUSICIAN
TOSHI REAGON

AUTHOR
JACQUELINE WOODSON

QUEER BLACK CINEMA'S
ANGEL BROWN-ROSS

ACTIVIST
DARLENE NIPPER

PHOTOGRAPHER
ZANELE MUHOLI

RAPPER
ACE REIGN

ALSO
GLO TV
BRIAN SLADE
KAOZ

www.swervmag.com

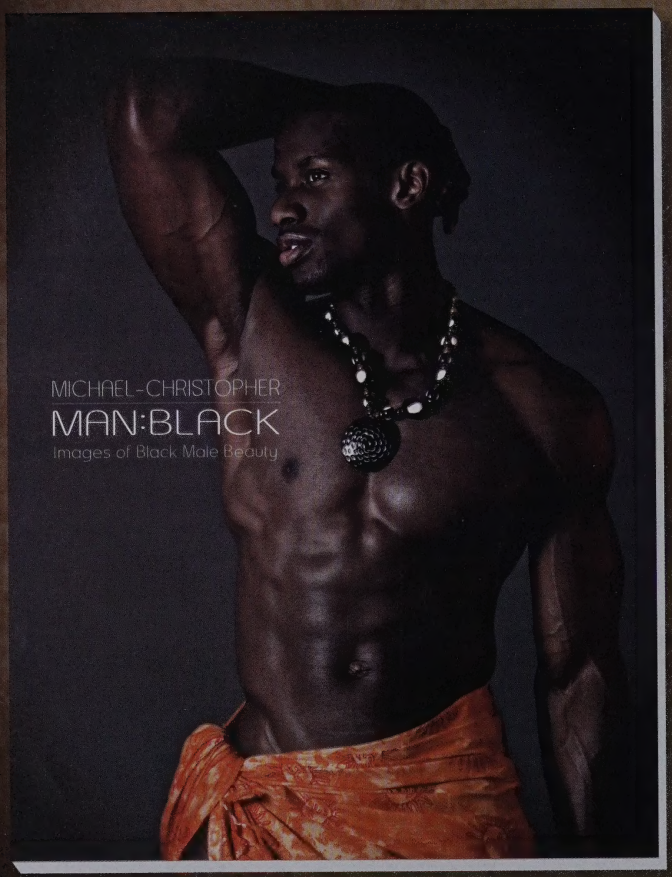
Available October 2010

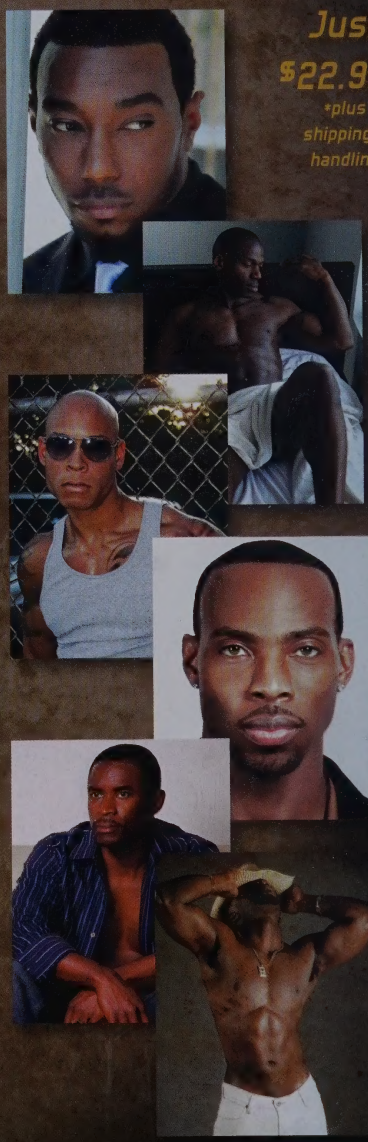
MC BOOKS

MAN:BLACK

Images of Black Male Beauty

Photographs by Michael-Christopher

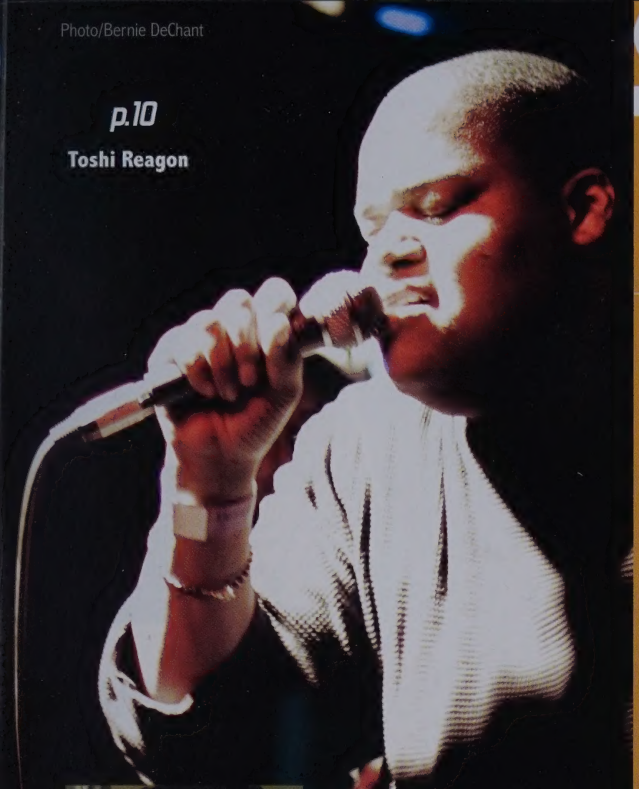


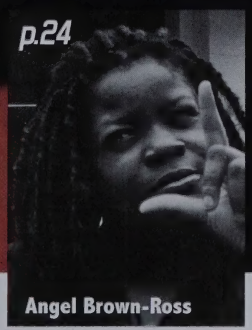


Just $22.99!*
*plus shipping & handling

Black never looked so good! Michael-Christopher has captured the true essence of the ebony male in his first collection of artistic photographs. Simply titled, *MAN: BLACK*, this full color, 100-page collection features breathtaking images illustrating the sensuality and strength of black men.

Join the Michael-Christopher Fan page on Facebook for updates and signings and visit www.michael-christopher.com to order now!





www.swervmag.com

Cover Photo/Jazzy Studios
Styling/Hair/Makeup/Yardé Noir Models/Sherita DeHonney and Nikki Pegues

SWERV

contents

FALL 2010

FEATURES

BIG, LOVELY AND THRIVING: TOSHI REAGON (+ONE) 10
L. Michael Gipson interviews one of the most renowned LGBT musician/producers.

WRITING FOR A BETTER WORLD 12
Clarence* J. Fluker gets familiar with accomplished out author Jacqueline Woodson and her body of work.

PICTURE THIS: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF ZANELE MUHOLI 14
Clarence* J. Fluker focuses on the groundbreaking work of South African photographer Zanele Muholi.

FEMME MEN: ON THE FRONT LINE? 21
Steven G. Fullwood examines the complex lives of effeminate man.

MAKE IT REIGN: 23
Dede Newby introduces us to the lesbian rapper Ace Reign.

REEL QUEER 24
Lisa Joyner sits down with the creator of the New York-based Queer Black Cinema.

DEPARTMENTS

FROM THE EDITOR 9
by Michael-Christopher

HEALTH 18
Women's health issues by Leslie Calman

COMMUNITY 19
Darlene Nipper

TELEVISION 20
GLO, Maurice Jamal's new urban LGBT network

MUSIC 22
The new Brian Slade and Kaoz CDs

"THE WAY I SEE IT" 26
Column by Rob Smith

EVENTS FOR US 30

©2010 SWERV, BrownStar Enterprises. All rights reserved.Reproduction of any material within this publication, in whole or in part, is prohibited without written consent of the publisher. The publisher assumes no responsibility to any party of the information, claims or ads herein to include errors, inaccuracies or omissions. By advertising, the advertiser agrees to indemnify the publisher against all claims relating to or resulting from said advertisement.

Us Helping Us,
People Into Living, Inc.
invites you to its
Fall Reception Fundraiser

A Passion for Living

An Evening of Live Music,
Fine Cuisine, and Celebration
Featuring Grammy-nominated
Recording Artist

Anthony David

Saturday, November 13th
6 pm - 9 pm
SunTrust Bank Penthouse
1445 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20005

$125 per ticket
Purchase online @
www.uhupil.org/2010-fall-reception

or call:
202-446-1100

Anthony David

Co-Chairs
A. Cornelius Baker &
Melvin White, Esq.

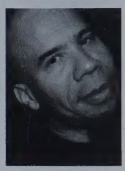
2010 Honorees:
Carlene Cheatam
Philip Parnell
Ernest Hopkins
Terrence Payton
Mildred and Eugene Young
Black Entertainment Television
Sargent Memorial Presbyterian Church

Help us save programs
that fight HIV/AIDS
in our community!

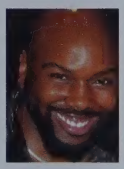
UHU

contributors

Clarence* J. Fluker is a freelance writer and blogger based in Washington, D.C. His work has appeared in a variety of print and online publications including *ARISE* magazine, where he served as Next Generation editor. His essay, "A Nation Divided," appears in the acclaimed anthology *Spirited* from RedBone Press. Fluker earned his undergraduate degree from Morgan State University and his graduate degree from American University.



Steven G. Fullwood is a writer living in Harlem. He was the recipient of the 1972 Martin Luther King Jr. School Trophy for Writing in Cursive as a kindergartner.

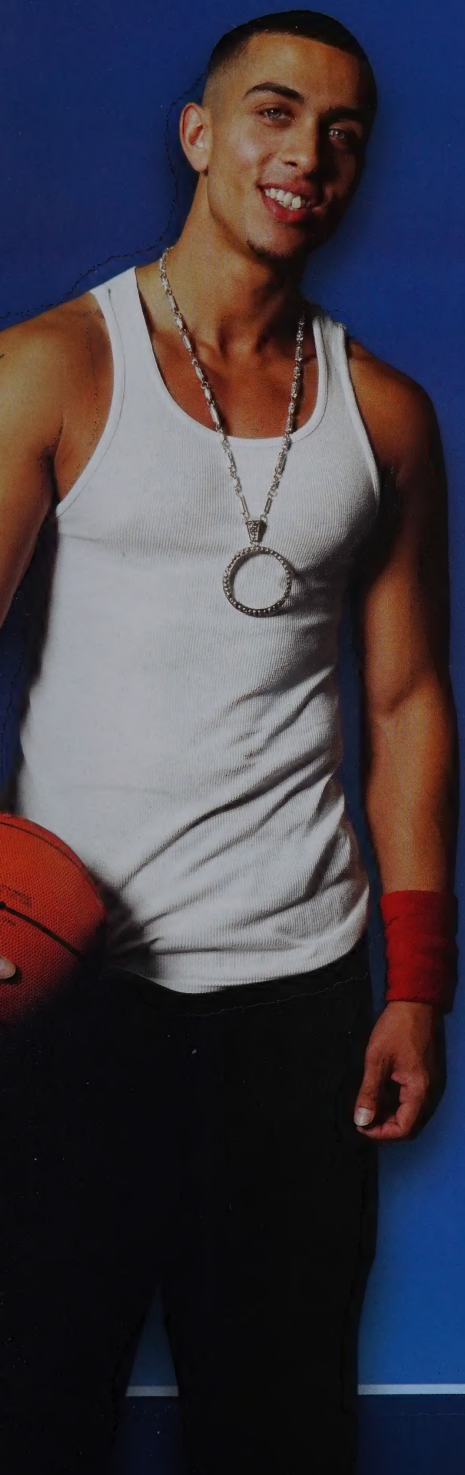


L. Michael Gipson is an Oakland-based cultural critic, community health planner and award-winning youth advocate. His sociopolitical essays have been published in two anthologies, including *Poverty & Race in America: The Emerging Agendas* (Chester Hartman, ed.). As a cultural critic and music journalist, Gipson's work has appeared in *Clik*, *Pulse*, *Arise*, *Pride*, *Amplify*, *Urban Dialect*, *Port of Harlem* and *Creative Loafing ATL*. He is editor and columnist at www.SoulTracks.com and heard weekly as "Cornfed" on *The Dave Brown Radio Show*.

Lisa Joyner is a freelance writer/editor, activist and a producer on WPFW's LGBT radio show, *Inside Out*, in Washington, D.C. Her recent work includes poetry in the anthologies *Growing Up Girl: A Manifesta* and *Just Like a Girl*. She lives in Washington, D.C.

Dede Newby's artistic and creative abilities became apparent at an early age. After an English professor took a personal interest in her writing talent, Newby began to work seriously on improving her writing skills. Newby landed her first freelance assignment with *Qmocha* magazine, then got a freelance position with *Qnotes*, a biweeky paper distributed throughout North and South Carolina. Newby then accepted a position with South Carolina Black Pride as the publicity coordinator where she wrote business articles, blogs, public releases and e-mails and several pieces concerning essential news, politics, organizational and community events. To express herself more artistically, Newby writes short stories which can be found on imfromdriftwood.com.

Washington, D.C. native Yardé Noir began Genesys Productions before graduating from Duke Ellington School of the Arts in 1997. Noir went on to Bennett Career Institute majoring in hair and make-up, lending his talents as an experienced cosmetologist. Noir has worked as a make-up artist for Smashbox Cosmetics and Pretty by PR, and sits on the artistic team for Joya Cosmetics. Noir is the 2008 Elite Beauty Make-Up Competition Winner. Noir also attended the Art Institute of Washington majoring in graphic design and is currently pursuing a master educator's license.



Day 1

Of my next treatment regimen: KALETRA once a day with my other HIV medicines.

Ask your doctor if KALETRA once daily is right for you.

KALETRA once daily should not be given to children. KALETRA once daily should not be taken with efavirenz (Atripla® and Sustiva®), nevirapine (Viramune®), amprenavir (Agenerase®), nelfinavir (Viracept®), carbamazepine (Tegretol® and Epitol®), phenobarbital (Luminal®), or phenytoin (Dilantin®). There may be a greater chance of getting diarrhea with the once daily regimen compared with the twice daily regimen.

Use

KALETRA® is a prescription anti-HIV-1 medicine called a protease inhibitor that contains lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to increase the chance of treatment response in people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) infection. It is not known if KALETRA is safe and effective in children under 14 days old.

KALETRA does not cure HIV-1 infection or AIDS and does not stop you from passing HIV-1 to others. You may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1.

KALETRA Safety Considerations

Do not take KALETRA® if you are allergic to any of its ingredients, including lopinavir or ritonavir. Do not take KALETRA with certain medicines, as they can cause serious problems, death, or make KALETRA less effective against HIV. Some patients taking KALETRA can develop inflammation of the pancreas and liver problems, which can cause death. Patients may develop changes in heart rhythm, large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol, diabetes, high blood sugar, changes in body fat, and/or increased bleeding in people with hemophilia. Some patients may develop signs and symptoms of serious infections they already have after starting anti-HIV medicines.

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088 (1-800-332-1088).

If you cannot afford your medication, contact: www.pparx.org or call the toll-free number (1-888-4PPA-NOW) or (1-888-477-2669) for assistance.

For additional information about KALETRA, call 1-866-KALETRA (1-866-525-3872) or visit KALETRA.com.

Please see Brief Summary on adjacent pages.

KALETRA®
(lopinavir/ritonavir)

Model is for illustrative purposes only.

©2010 Abbott Laboratories Abbott Park, IL 60064
039-403017 June 2010 Printed in U.S.A.

KALETRA® (kuh-LEE-tra) (lopinavir/ritonavir) Tablets
KALETRA® (kuh-LEE-tra) (lopinavir/ritonavir) Oral Solution

CONSUMER BRIEF SUMMARY
CONSULT PACKAGE INSERT FOR FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION

Patient Information

Read the Medication Guide that comes with KALETRA before you start taking it and each time you get a refill. There may be new information. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor about your medical condition or treatment. You and your doctor should talk about your treatment with KALETRA before you start taking it and at regular check-ups. You should stay under your doctor's care when taking KALETRA.

What is the most important information I should know about KALETRA?

KALETRA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Interactions with other medicines. It is important to know the medicines that should not be taken with KALETRA.** Read the section "What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?"
- **Changes in your heart rhythm and the electrical activity of your heart.** These changes may be seen on an EKG (electrocardiogram) and can lead to serious heart problems. Your risk for these problems may be higher if you:
  - already have a history of abnormal heart rhythm or other types of heart disease.
  - take other medicines that can affect your heart rhythm while you take KALETRA.

Tell your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms while taking KALETRA:

- dizziness
- lightheadedness
- fainting
- sensation of abnormal heartbeats

See the section below "What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?" for more information about serious side effects.

What is KALETRA?

KALETRA is a prescription anti-HIV medicine that contains two medicines: lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is called a protease inhibitor that is used with other anti-HIV-1 medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) infection. HIV-1 is the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

It is not known if KALETRA is safe and effective in children under 14 days old.

Who should not take KALETRA?

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please see **"Can I take other medicines with KALETRA?" and consult with your doctor about all other medicines you take.**
- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir and lopinavir.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

KALETRA may not be right for you. Tell your doctor about all your medical conditions, including if you:

- have any heart problems, including if you have a condition called Congenital Long QT Syndrome.
- have liver problems, including Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C.
- have diabetes.
- have hemophilia. People who take KALETRA may have increased bleeding.
- have low potassium in your blood.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. It is not known if KALETRA will harm your unborn baby. Birth control pills or patches may not work as well while you take KALETRA. To prevent pregnancy while taking KALETRA, women who take birth control pills or use estrogen patch for birth control should either use a different type of birth control or an extra form of birth control. Talk to your doctor about how to prevent pregnancy while taking KALETRA.
- take KALETRA during pregnancy, talk with your doctor about how you can take part in an antiretroviral pregnancy registry. The purpose of the pregnancy registry is to follow the health of you and your baby.
- are breast-feeding. Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV-1. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby while taking KALETRA, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. If your baby does not already have HIV-1, there is a chance that HIV-1 can be passed to your baby through your breast milk.

Tell your doctor about all the medicines you take, including prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. Many medicines interact with KALETRA. Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your doctor or pharmacist. Your doctor can tell you if it is safe to take KALETRA with other medicines. Your doctor may need to change the dose of other medicines while you take KALETRA.

Medicines you should not take with KALETRA.

Serious problems or death can happen if you take these medicines with KALETRA:

- ergot containing medicines, including:
  - ergotamine tartrate (Cafergot®, Migergot, Ergomar, Ergostat, Medihaler Ergotamine, Wigraine, Wigrettes)
  - dihydroergotamine mesylate (D.H.E. 45®, Embolex, Migranal®)
  - ergonovine, ergonovine and methylergonovine (Ergotrate, Methergine), ergotamine and methylergonovine
  - Ergotrate Maleate, methylergonovine maleate (Methergine)
- triazolam (Halcion®), midazolam hydrochloride oral syrup
- pimozide (Orap®)
- the cholesterol lowering medicines lovastatin (Mevacor®) or simvastatin (Zocor®)
- sildenafil (Revatio®) only when used for the treatment of pulmonary arterial hypertension. (See "Medicines that may need changes" and "What are the

possible side effects of Kaletra?" for information about the use of sildenafil for erectile problems.)
- alfuzosin (Uroxatral®)

Medicines that you should not take with KALETRA since they may make KALETRA not work as well:
- the herbal supplement St. John's Wort (hypericum perforatum)
- rifampin (Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®)

Medicines that may need changes:
- birth control pills that contain estrogen ("the pill") or the birth control (contraceptive) patches
- certain anticancer medicines, such as nilotinib (Tasigna®) and dasatinib (Sprycel®)
- certain cholesterol lowering medicines, such as atorvastatin (Lipitor®) or rosuvastatin (Crestor®)
- certain other antiretroviral medicines, such as efavirenz (Atripla® and Sustiva®), nevirapine (Viramune®), amprenavir (Agenerase®) and nelfinavir (Viracept®)
- anti-seizure medicines, such as phenytoin (Dilantin®) carbamazepine, (Tegretol®), phenobarbital
- medicines for erectile problems, such as sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®), or vardenafil (Levitra®)
- medicines for tuberculosis (TB), such as rifabutin (Mycobutin®)
- inhaled steroid medicines, such as fluticasone propionate (Flonase®)
- inhaled medicines such as salmeterol (Serevent®) or salmeterol in combination with fluticasone propionate (Advair®). Your doctor may need to change to a different medicine
- medicines for gout, such as colchicine (Colcrys®)
- medicines to treat pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH), such as bosentan (Tracleer®) or tadalafil (Adcirca®)
- pain medicines, such as fentanyl (Duragesic®, Ionsys™, Fentora®) and methadone

If you are not sure if you are taking a medicine above, ask your doctor.

How should I take KALETRA?

- Take KALETRA every day exactly as prescribed by your doctor.
- It is very important to set up a dosing schedule and follow it every day.
- Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- Swallow KALETRA tablets whole. Do not chew, break, or crush KALETRA tablets.
- KALETRA tablets can be taken with or without food.
- If you are taking both Videx® (didanosine) and KALETRA:
  - didanosine can be taken at the same time as KALETRA tablets, without food.
  - take didanosine either one hour before or two hours after taking KALETRA oral solution.
- Do not miss a dose of KALETRA. This could make the virus harder to treat. If you forget to take KALETRA, take the missed dose right away. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Instead, follow your regular dosing schedule by taking your next dose at its regular time. Do not take more than one dose of KALETRA at one time.
- If you take more than the prescribed dose of KALETRA, call your local poison control center or emergency room right away.
- Take KALETRA oral solution with food to help it work better.
- If KALETRA is being used for your child, tell your doctor if your child's weight changes.
- KALETRA **should not** be given one time each day in children. When giving KALETRA to your child, give KALETRA exactly as prescribed.
- KALETRA oral solution contains a large amount of alcohol.
  - If a young child drinks more than the recommended dose, it could make them sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room right away.
  - Talk with your doctor if you take or plan to take metronidazole or disulfiram. You can have severe nausea and vomiting if you take these medicines with KALETRA.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. It is important not to run out of KALETRA. The amount of HIV-1 virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may become resistant to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- KALETRA can be taken with acid reducing agents used for heartburn or reflux such as omeprazole (Prilosec®) and ranitidine (Zantac®) with no dose adjustment.
- KALETRA should not be administered once daily in combination with carbamazepine (Tegretol® and Epitol®), phenobarbital (Luminal®), or phenytoin (Dilantin®).

Avoid doing things that can spread HIV infection. KALETRA does not stop you from passing HIV infection to others. Do not share needles, other injection equipment or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them, like toothbrushes and razor blades. Always practice safer sex by using a latex or polyurethane condom to lower the chance of sexual contact with semen, vaginal secretions, or blood.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

KALETRA can cause serious side effects.
- See **"What is the most important information I should know about KALETRA?"**
- **Liver problems**. Liver problems, including death, can happen in people who take KALETRA. Blood tests in people who take KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these signs and symptoms of liver problems:
  - loss of appetite
  - yellow skin and whites of eyes (jaundice)
  - dark-colored urine
  - pale colored stools, itchy skin
  - stomach area (abdominal) pain.
- **Inflammation of the pancreas (pancreatitis)**. Some people who take KALETRA get inflammation of the pancreas which may be serious and cause death. You have a higher chance of getting pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain while taking KALETRA. These may be signs of pancreatitis.
- **Increases in certain fat (triglycerides and cholesterol) levels in your blood**. Large increases of triglycerides and cholesterol can be seen in blood test results of some people who take KALETRA. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.
- **Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia)**. Some people who take protease inhibitors including KALETRA get new or more serious diabetes, or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you notice an increase in thirst or urinate often while taking KALETRA.

- **Changes in body fat**. Changes in body fat in some people who take antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long-term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.
- **Increased bleeding for hemophiliacs**. Some people with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors including KALETRA.
- **Increased risk of certain problems when you take medicines used for the treatment of erectile problems such as sildenafil (Viagra®), tadalafil (Cialis®), or vardenafil (Levitra®) with KALETRA:**
  - **low blood pressure**. If you get dizzy or faint, you need to lie down. Tell your doctor if you feel dizzy, or have fainting spells.
  - **vision changes**. Tell your doctor right away if you have vision changes.
  - **penis erection lasting more than 4 hours**. If you are a male and have an erection that lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.
- **Allergic reactions**. Skin rashes, some of them severe, can occur in people who take KALETRA. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a rash when you took another medicine for your HIV infection or if you notice any skin rash when you take KALETRA.

Common side effects of KALETRA include:

- diarrhea
- nausea
- stomach area (abdominal) pain
- feeling weak
- vomiting
- headache
- upset stomach

These are not all of the possible side effects of KALETRA. For more information, ask your doctor or pharmacist. Tell your doctor about any side effect that bothers you or that does not go away.

Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

How should I store KALETRA?

KALETRA tablets:

- Store KALETRA tablets at room temperature, between 59°F to 86°F (15°C to 30°C).
- Do not keep KALETRA tablets out of the container it comes in for longer than 2 weeks, especially in areas where there is a lot of humidity. Keep the container closed tightly.

KALETRA oral solution:

- Store KALETRA oral solution in a refrigerator, between 36°F to 46°F (2°C to 8°C). KALETRA oral solution that is kept refrigerated may be used until the expiration date printed on the label.
- KALETRA oral solution that is stored at room temperature (less than 77°F or 25°C) should be used within 2 months.
- Keep KALETRA away from high heat.

Throw away any medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need.

Keep KALETRA and all medicines out of the reach of children.

General information about KALETRA

KALETRA does not cure HIV-1 or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV-1 infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Medication Guide. Do not use KALETRA for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not give KALETRA to other people, even if they have the same condition you have. It may harm them.

This Medication Guide summarizes the most important information about KALETRA. If you would like more information, talk with your doctor. You can ask your pharmacist or doctor for information about KALETRA that is written for health professionals. For more information about KALETRA call 1-800-633-9110 or go to www.KALETRA.com.

What are the ingredients in KALETRA?

Active ingredient: lopinavir and ritonavir

Inactive ingredients:

KALETRA 200 mg lopinavir and 50 mg ritonavir tablets: copovidone, sorbitan monolaurate, colloidal silicon dioxide, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The film coating contains: hypromellose, titanium dioxide, polyethylene glycol 400, hydroxypropyl cellulose, talc, colloidal silicon dioxide, polyethylene glycol 3350, yellow ferric oxide 172, and polysorbate 80.

KALETRA 100 mg lopinavir and 25 mg ritonavir tablets: copovidone, sorbitan monolaurate, colloidal silicon dioxide, and sodium stearyl fumarate. The film coating contains: polyvinyl alcohol, titanium dioxide, talc, polytheylene glycol 3350, and yellow ferric oxide E172.

KALETRA oral solution: acesulfame potassium, alcohol, artificial cotton candy flavor, citric acid, glycerin, high fructose corn syrup, Magnasweet-110 flavor, menthol, natural and artificial vanilla flavor, peppermint oil, polyoxyl 40 hydrogenated castor oil, povidone, propylene glycol, saccharin sodium, sodium chloride, sodium citrate, and water.

KALETRA oral solution contains 42.4% alcohol (v/v). "See How should I take KALETRA?".

KALETRA Tablets, 200 mg lopinavir/50 mg ritonavir
Manufactured by Abbott Pharmaceuticals PR Ltd., Barceloneta, PR 00617
for Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, IL 60064, U.S.A.

KALETRA Tablets, 100 mg lopinavir/25 mg ritonavir and KALETRA Oral Solution
Abbott Laboratories, North Chicago, IL 60064, U.S.A.

2010, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

* The brands listed are trademarks of their respective owners and are not trademarks of Abbott Laboratories. The makers of these brands are not affiliated with and do not endorse Abbott Laboratories or its products.

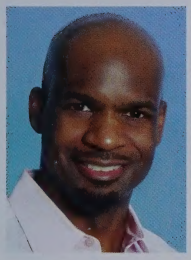
This Medication Guide has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Ref: 03-A387-R8
Revised: June, 2010
036-395112 **MASTER**

039-403017

Abbott

swerv
po box 1249 • washington, dc 20013-1249 • swervmag.com • info@swervmag.com



MICHAEL-CHRISTOPHER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF/CO-PUBLISHER/
ART DIRECTOR

JAMIL FLETCHER
ADVERTISING SALES/MARKETING/
CO-PUBLISHER

LISA C. MOORE
COPY EDITOR

NATIONAL ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVE:
RIVENDELL MEDIA
1248 ROUTE 22 WEST
MOUNTAINSIDE, NJ 07092; 908-232-2021

From the Editor

This issue of *SWERV* is dedicated to the wonderful lesbians of the black LGBT community. Just as in general society, women are often overlooked in the gay community, but lesbians have been just as influential in politics, art, music, sports, health and education. They are on the front lines fighting for equal rights, same-sex marriage and anti-discrimination laws.

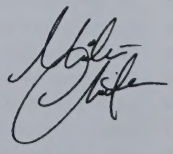
Musician Toshi Reagon has been making noise in the music industry for nearly 30 years and has shared the stage with superstars such as Nona Hendryx, Elvis Costello, Ani DiFranco, Lizz Wright and Me'shell NdegéOcello. She comes from a musical family, so talent was in great supply—which is the sole reason Toshi has survived both the wavering music industry and the notion that only soul-singing divas can make it.

Out author Jacqueline Woodson has written an astounding 30 books, won multiple awards and gained attention and praise along the way. Her books deal with issues like teen pregnancy, tolerance and race. And to think this amazing writer began writing from telling stories as a child—but not "once upon a time" stories; as she puts it, "outright lies." It was those tall tales which led to her wonderful body of work.

Zanele Muholi, the world-renowned South African photographer, bravely documents LGBT issues in Africa where being gay can be deadly. Muholi's work has been shown in Johannesburg, Milan, Lagos and, soon, São Paulo. Aside from capturing images, this trailblazer has worked as community relations officer for the Forum for the Empowerment of Women (FEW) and reporter for e-zine *Behind the Mask*.

Film buff Angel Brown-Ross took her passion for the movies and created the Queer Black Cinema (QBC) International Film Festival in Harlem, which takes place this October. Angel has also launched a new LGBT magazine called *Cinematiq*.

Also in this issue, learn about up coming rapper Ace Reign; and Steven G. Fullwood looks at the lives of effeminate men. So call your best girlfriend and enjoy *SWERV*'s celebration!



Michael-Christopher
Editor-in-Chief

BIG, LOVELY AND THRIVING: TOSHI REAGON (+ ONE)

Words/L. Michael Gipson
Photos/ Bernie DeChant

Toshi Reagon has been a preternatural force in the music business over the last three decades. Since her 1990 debut, Justice, *the unconventional Reagon has been pushing the boundaries of what is socially and commercially acceptable for black women artists, especially one who's been openly lesbian since day one. Despite being born of an enviable pedigree as the daughter of Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, founder of Sweet Honey in the Rock, Reagon's rise was anything but a foregone conclusion. In an era of Lycra jumpsuits, big weave and manufactured vocals, Toshi Reagon came along as a dreadlocked, full-figured blues, folk and rock singer whose voice had all the power of the ancestors.*

Despite the long odds, Reagon survived over scores of black female artists who have come and gone in those years. Nine solo albums, several production credits and the launch of her own label imprint later, Reagon is hotter than ever—from performing for President Barack Obama to co-producing Lizz Wright's forthcoming album, Fellowship. SWERV *had the chance to catch up with the Big Lovely entrepreneur to get the lowdown.*

SWERV: Your mother founded Sweet Honey in the Rock, your father [Cordell Hull Reagon] was a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) civil rights icon who also co-founded the Freedom Singers with your mother, and folk legend Pete Seeger was your godfather. As a girl had you ever considered being anything other than a socially conscious musician?

Toshi Reagon: I thought I would be an athlete, particularly a football player. I love football. I love sports. Yankees/Jets/Knicks/Liberty—my favorite baller is Kevin Garnett. I was raised by my mom, who raised me to be whatever I wanted to be, who loved me completely, and worked her ass off so that I had a wide-open space to look at in terms of what was possible for me. She listened to me when it was clear that I was heading toward music. She was incredibly supportive. I am into rock. My early bands were Labelle, Zeppelin, Kiss, Black Sabbath, Fleetwood Mac, and, yes, she would slip a few blues records in so I would know where that music came from. Big Mama Thornton, Big Bill Broonzy, Howlin' Wolf—these are masters of all things musical in American pop music, hip-hop, dance, folk, metal and whatever. My mom is good people.

SWERV: How did you secure your first record deal?

TR: I have just been informed by the writer Eva Yaa Asantewaa that I have been doing this for almost thirty years. Yikes! I say, really? She wrote my most current bio. I have the same spirit and bright eyes for music that I ever had. My first record was on the old folk label, Flying Fish. They gave me no money. They just put out what I had already done. Soon after, I was opening for Lenny Kravitz's first world tour. Flying Fish was good folks, but they could not do anything in terms of supporting an artist; I got the tour on my own. After that, I was signed to Elektra Records. That record never came out, but I met Nona Hendryx, my favorite member of Labelle. She became one of my music mothers, along with my mom and the rock guitarist and producer June Millington.

SWERV: How does performing a spiritual or field song resonate for you when compared to a folk or rock song?

TR: I do all kinds of music. It all has to feel right coming out of my mouth. I don't fake anything. I don't lie about the sound I can make with my body. It is the most sacred thing I have other than breathing. My mom talks about black people being kidnapped from home and sold into slavery. What is it that we held on to? The sound we make. The sound that comes from us is our home, is our house. It is important to keep our sound language current and contemporary. It is important to pass on and hold our sound from generation to generation. It is our survival weapon. It is our anchor. So no matter what I sing, that is there.

SWERV: As a legacy keeper of folk and black roots music, how important is it to you to share, educate and make relevant for the next generation the songs/music that sustained black people for centuries?

TR: Collaboration is my favorite thing to do. It is very important for me to work with different artists, from different generations, and share everything. Young folks change and grow everything. It is so important to give them the space to do that.

SWERV: You're an out black lesbian musician performing alternative music for a sitting president. How does that happen?

TR: I don't know how I seem to other folks. I have a path. I am on it till I die. Obama is incredible. I beg people to look beyond the headlines and reach deep to see the work he is doing. We must also not ignore the viciousness of the attacks against him. It is an attack against us. There is a huge machine geared toward tearing him down. History has shown that [we're] a country that was started on the ideals of justice and equality for all, but it's really only for a very narrow group of the population, mainly property-owning white men. People always have a horrible time when that original idea of justice and equality for all gets widened. People lose their damn minds. That is what we are swimming in. I ask myself, is there not a disaster big enough to bring us together? The answer is no.

When I went into the White House, the only pictures of people of color I saw were the Obamas. I didn't see the whole White House, so maybe it is different in other places [of the house]. That is a friggin' problem.

My friend Ani DiFranco reminded me to be myself [for my White House performance]. I wore my Baracklyn T-shirt and rocked out with my mom and the Freedom Singers. I met Michelle Obama and the President. They are the most gracious and kind people ever. Yes, they are as beautiful in person. They were made for the job they are doing.

I was there because Obama has opened the door to the White House wide. It is significant because I think he is one of the first presidents that we have had that welcome all of the people living in America, not just folks he is comfortable with or who gave him money. It is a crazy job and you cannot satisfy the whole of the population. But I think he tries to welcome the diversity that is here.

SWERV: In public, you've been relatively nonchalant about your sexuality and androgynous presentation since your 1990 debut. Where does that ease and self-love come from and how can others get a little of that in their own lives?

TR: (Laughs) Androgynous. My people raised me right. I grew up with all kinds of people around. Don't pick on your kids about how they look. Tell them they are beautiful, ask them what they think, listen more than you talk. I am so loved. I feel right in my skin, I feel right on time. I try to keep it simple. I understand how wealthy I am on this planet. I feel lucky to not be under the stress and oppression that other people in the world are under. To wake up in the morning and worry about water is terrible. I will not waste the good position that I am in. I am in the great company of a powerful and committed community that challenges and focuses me.

SWERV: You've been partnered for ages and raising a daughter in a same-sex family for years. Yet historically marriage hasn't always been kind to women. As a womanist in a long-term same-sex partnership, how do you feel about marriage equality for women?

TR: My mom was married to my dad, and when they got divorced the judge ordered my dad to pay $25 a month for child support. There were two kids. My mom's lawyer said that's not enough, so he raised it to $40. I mean come on, the judge is protecting him over two kids. My pops (R.I. P. daddy) never paid it.

Marriage is not in my near future. We are committed to each other for life no matter what, but [there will be] no trip to some other state for a "legal" marriage. I support my friends who want to get married. I asked Bob if she would let me share her thoughts on marriage. Here you go:

J. Bob Alotta (filmmaker/activist/cultural instigator): In all my years as a thinking, conscious, politically savvy, queer, colored person, I have never before let the Right, or the government in general, set my

continued on page 28

WRITING FOR A BETTER WORLD

Words/Clarence* J. Fluker
Photo/Marty Umans

You will find her in classrooms, libraries and children's bookshelves around the world. Her ideas, sense of hope and voice for those young people who at times may feel like they don't have one of their own—they're all in the pages of her award-winning books. Jacqueline Woodson is one of the most heralded writers of literature for young readers of our time. She also happens to be an out lesbian of African descent. The list of accolades for her work stretches long, and includes the Caldecott Honor for Coming on Home Soon*; a Coretta Scott King Honor and National Book Award finalist for* Locomotion *and Coretta Scott King Award for* Miracle's Boys*; a Newbery Honor Medal for* Feathers *and* Show Way*; and the American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults award for her works* Hush, Miracle's Boys *and* If You Come Softly. *(A complete list is available at www.jacquelinewoodson.com.) Woodson's books for young people help encourage them to re-imagine and understand themselves and the world they live in—the one they inherit and can make better. Woodson took a moment to speak with me about her work.*

SWERV: The idea of community is a theme in many of your books. Why is that so important to you?

Jacqueline Woodson: I think community is important to many people of color in that we are often raised in them, more so than in nuclear families. I believe strongly in community and think they help broaden our thinking and allow us to see a bigger world, so naturally this would come across in my writing.

SWERV: How did your experiences as a teenager inform and influence your current work?

JW: A lot of who I was seems to go into the creation of my characters. Although I grew up in a Southern, religious family, I was allowed some leeway and exposed to lots of ways of thinking and being. Our community was diverse in so many ways—economically, ethnically, you name it—that person either lived on our block or visited it during the summer. So I was constantly seeing and watching and, as a result, my characters are watchers and thinkers...and ultimately doers.

SWERV: Have you ever been afraid that your books would be deemed too controversial for discussing things like teen pregnancy, relationships or sexuality?

JW: My books get "challenged" and censored left and right and sideways but it doesn't stop me. I'm not writing for the people who want to silence me, I'm writing for myself and for those who need to hear the voices of my characters (and, by extension, their own voice) in the world.

SWERV: The stories you write often challenge their characters and typically their young readers to push beyond boundaries of race, gender and class. If you were asked to write a book targeted at gay adults, what themes do you think you would explore?

JW: The same themes I explore in all of my books. My books are for queer people and straight people. As a community, we're all struggling with the same thing—that need for tolerance, understanding and hope. I don't ever want a gay teen to not see some part of themselves in my books. But I also want all teens to see themselves. So I wouldn't do anything different.

SWERV: When you were a young girl, did you ever imagine that you'd be writing books for young people as an adult?

JW: I knew I'd be writing but not like this. I had no idea I'd have this body of work in the world and be able to write about things that really, really matter to me. It's kind of amazing.

SWERV: What would you say has been the highlight of your career thus far?

JW: I think there are many. I think being able to write and have a family and watch my children grow up to read my books (even though my daughter, at 8, said yesterday, "I have to say, I'm not a fan of your work, Mommy"). But it's big to be able to be in the world this way. I love that I've gotten a lot of medal and plaques and stickers for my books. I love walking into classrooms and the kids having read the stuff that started in my head. I don't know... the list goes on and on. I've written nearly thirty books now and each time, it's different, and a sometimes amazingly wonderful experience.

SWERV: What do you find most enjoyable about writing?

JW: I love being able to think deeply about the lives of other people, to have the space to sit with an idea and slowly shape that idea into a world. I love when I've figured out what the story is trying to say and when the characters begin to come alive because of this. And I love when I finish a book.

SWERV: Presumably, you explore real life complexities of identity in your books aimed at young people because you have the confidence that they can consume them, analyze them and move in their own directions in their search for self and how they see themselves in the world around them. Do you think our society offers them enough of these opportunities?

JW: That's a really good question, and I don't know if I can answer it well. I think it's ultimately up to the family/ community to give the child a bigger vision of a greater good. But too often, adults don't want to see too much of the world and definitely don't want their children to see it. So if adults want to wear blinders, then their children are going to grow up with limited vision. But if people are open, then their children will be.

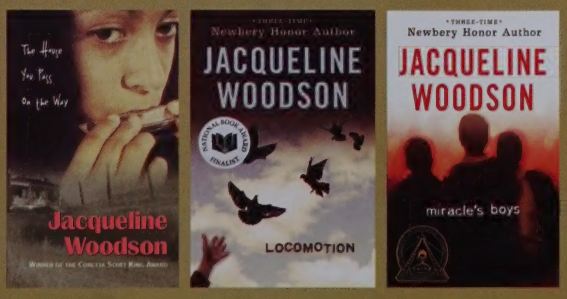
SWERV: What are your favorite books?

JW: I have so many I don't even know where to begin. The ones I come back to always, though, are *If Beale Street Could Talk* and *Another Country* by James Baldwin; *The Cancer Journals* by Audre Lorde; the poems of Cornelius Eady and Nick Flynn; the stories of Raymond Carver; *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee; *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor; *American Negro Poetry: An Anthology*, edited by Arna Bontemps; *The Miseducation of the Negro* by Carter G. Woodson; *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia Maclachlan... the list really does go on and on...

SWERV: What can we expect to see from you next?

JW: *Pecan Pie Baby* is coming out in October of this year. It's a picture book. My play *Locomotion* is opening at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. on October 23, 2010. Another picture book, *Each Kindness*, will be out in 2011, as will a young adult novel that I need to get back to after this interview!

Learn more about Jacqueline Woodson and her books at www.jacquelinewoodson.com.



Just a taste of the 30 books penned by Jacqueline Woodson: The House You Pass on the Way, Locomotion *and* Miracle's Boys.

PICTURE THIS:

The Photography of Zanele Muholi

Words/Clarence* J. Fluker

Miss Lesbian I.
Amsterdam, 2009
Self-portrait.

As a child growing up in South Africa, Zanele Muholi says that she was fascinated by the idea of taking pictures and memorializing moments and images in time. In her Zulu community it was primarily the role of men to be behind the lens, with the power to choose what and how images would be captured for the record. Women were typically framed through the eyes and gaze of men as the men saw them, and not necessarily how they saw themselves. Muholi began taking pictures at family gatherings and other informal events as a way to explore the power of the lens and to claim that power for herself.

Born in Umlazi township in Durban in 1972, she matured in an age in which her country underwent rapid transformation and political transition during and after apartheid.

Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuta, Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg 2007

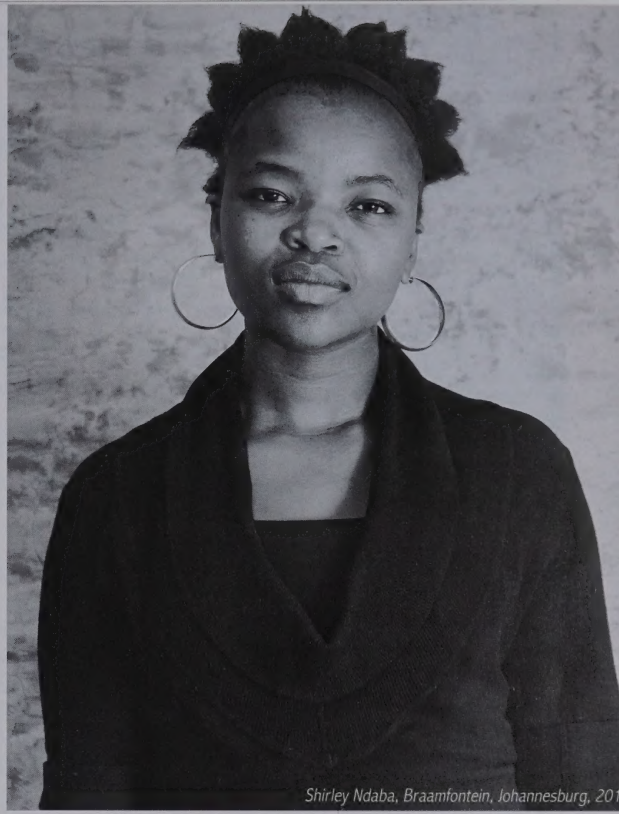
As an adult she worked many years in Johannesburg as a human rights activist. Muholi's participation in the Market Photo Workshop in 2001, however, opened her up to a type of visual activism: She could combine and fully assert her passion, artistry, activism and desire to be an archivist of truth. Muholi says, "I began to wonder in 2001 how I could turn myself and my community from being objectified to become the producers of our own histories, knowledges and subjectivities. My objective was to produce work for the very same subjects I would capture, in order for them/us/me to see our likenesses, and for the future generations to have a point of reference in our collective memories, in the archives, and beyond."

Katlego Mashiloane and Nosipho Lavuta, Ext. 2, Lakeside, Johannesburg 2007

The "them/us/me" that Muholi speaks of is black African lesbian women. Historically, stories about the lives of these women have not been told in full and, when they have, they weren't told by the subjects themselves. Muholi uses her photography to allow this to happen. She uses her camera to highlight images of diverse black African lesbians in their relationships with themselves and others in raw, real and natural ways. Her work depicts tragedy and triumph of the human spirit, manifestations of love and hate, and always what, simply, is.

One of her most exciting and much discussed contributions to the world was her research paper, *Mapping Our Histories: A visual history of black lesbians in post-Apartheid South Africa.* Muholi says she created it for two reasons: "First, because we do not yet have such a history in the form of representation; and second, because like the drawing of a road map full of roads, rivers, cities, mountain ranges and valleys, our black lesbian history is not linear, but crisscrosses and intersects with our race, gender, sexuality, class and colonial histories."

Lerato Nkutha, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 2010



Shirley Ndaba, Braamfontein, Johannesburg, 201

Since completing her advanced study in photography at the Market Workshop she has gained tremendous experience and notoriety. After having her work featured in group exhibitions for several years, in spring 2004 she had her first solo exhibition at the Johannesburg Art Gallery, *Visual Sexuality: Only Half the Picture*. Her solo exhibition toured internationally in 2006. Another show followed in 2008 at Le Case d'Arte, Milan, and later she exhibited alongside Lucy Azubuike at the CCA, Lagos in Nigeria. She has been the recipient of the Tollman Award for the Visual Arts, the BHP Billiton/Wits University Visual Arts Fellowship, and was the 2009 Ida Ely Rubin Artist-in-Residence at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 2009 she also received her master of fine arts degree in documentary media from Ryerson University in Toronto.

Muholi uses her work as a platform to make visible those who others would keep invisible, spark conversations about hate crimes and unfair treatment of lesbian women in her country, and educate and inspire others about a human experience. She continues to be an advocate for social justice—through her own work, and through Photo Experience (XP), a program she initiated to put cameras in the hands of other lesbian women so that they, too, can frame them/us/me for themselves.

Muholi is expected to have her work shown at the São Paulo Biennial this fall. For more information visit www.zanelemuholi.com.

Being, 20

Helping lesbians and bi women get healthy

Words/Leslie Calman

What are barriers to good health for lesbian and bisexual women? And how do we remove those barriers?

Health and health behaviors are influenced by a multitude of factors, including public policies, the actions of community organizations, government, individual choices and environment. And for lesbian and bisexual women a social environment of prejudice and stigma continues to play a major role in determining health, by

- creating stress,
- encouraging depression and anxiety,
- allowing violence, and
- limiting economic resources—which in this country means limiting health care services.

But there are counter-influences: A strong sense of community can improve one's outlook and mental health. And there are a number of public policy and hospital policy improvements that can be made.

Mental health

Researchers talk about a syndrome of "minority stress" experienced by members of any minority group that experience a cumulative, chronic and additive stress stemming from repeated small- and large-scale social discrimination and alienation. There is evidence of somewhat higher depression and anxiety rates among adult lesbians than heterosexuals; and much more severe depression and anxiety rates among lesbian and bisexual teens than among heterosexual teens.

Research shows that when people perceive that they lack the support of family, friends and coworkers, they are more likely to experience mental health difficulties. Indeed, rejection by one's family is strongly associated with mental illness in LGBT individuals. Where there's community and family support, these are important protections.

We also know that when women are "out" they are more likely to have positive self-esteem, and better mental health—but we don't know which of these causes the other. Are lesbians happier when they're out? Or out when they're happier?

Another health issue is violence

Lesbian women experience more violence from strangers than their heterosexual peers, with the highest rates experienced by butch women. Lesbians also report more physical assaults in childhood than heterosexual women do—many studies suggest that victimization against sexual minorities is common in our schools. Violence is particularly prevalent among male to female transgender people, and particularly transwomen of color.

Lesbians also experience partner violence, but at lower reported rates than heterosexual women. Still, the real rates may be higher; embarrassment and unwillingness to deal with the authorities when reporting lesbian partner violence may well account for limited reporting.

How do we deal with these problems?

Possibly in response, there are a number of self-destructive behaviors within the community. These behaviors are often ascribed simply to stress. It may be more complicated, though; some of these behaviors are condoned and encouraged by the community as a rejection of "straight norms." And that's unfortunate, because it's unhealthy.

One of these behaviors is smoking. Smoking, of course, is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, causing lung cancer and increasing the risk of heart disease and many other cancers. Some studies report two lesbian/bisexual women smokers for every heterosexual female smoker.

Another destructive behavior is alcohol abuse: Lesbian and bi women use alcohol more frequently, in higher amounts, and experience higher alcohol-related morbidity than heterosexual women. Studies show that twice as many lesbians are "heavy drinkers"—that is, 60 or more drinks per month—than heterosexual women. Our social life may play a role in this.

And then there's obesity, which is more prevalent among LBT women than among heterosexual women, with negative implications for heart disease and cancer. Some researchers have hypothesized that LBT women tend toward overweight because they do not strive to meet cultural expectations of body size. Lesbian consistently report higher ideal weights than heterosexual women, as well as less preoccupation with weight, lower drives for thinness, and higher attractiveness ratings for heavier (though not necessarily overweight) women.

The relative sense of ease around weight has its positive mental health points—but it also has negative implications for cancers, heart disease and diabetes.

Access and avoidance

Finally, perhaps the largest issue in lesbian health is we have poor health outcomes because of not seeing physicians regularly and getting screened or treated.

Why is this? We are underinsured. Marriage is a strong predictor of health insurance, and women are far more likely than men to be covered under another person's (usually a husband's) policy. (The new federal policies broadening insurance coverage is good news for our community. Legal marriage for same-sex partners would also be a big help.)

And perhaps most important is this: We have had negative health-care experiences, ranging from non-inclusion to outright hostility. These past negative experiences make us reluctant to seek care; lesbians delay health-seeking behaviors until they are symptomatic or until symptoms are at their worst. And of course, that delay—the failure to have mammograms and Pap tests, the failure to have diabetes or high blood pressure diagnosed—can be fatal.

Some positive solutions

Mautner Project, a 20-year old organization dedicated to improving the health of lesbian and bisexual women and transgender people, attacks these problems in several ways.

- We train doctors and other health care professionals. Our "Removing the Barriers" training teaches providers how to create welcoming environments, how to be sensitive and aware, and what particular health issues exist in the lesbian/bi community. We make this training available to health care providers around the country.
- We do outreach in the community to inform us of the need to get regular screenings for cancer, heart disease and diabetes, and to help women to access those screenings.
- And we provide hands-on assistance to help lesbians/bisexual women to quit smoking, and to attain a healthier weight

Improving our awareness and helping our sisters to get the care they need are tasks everyone in the community can participate in. Buddy up: Take a friend to her mammogram, remind her about that annual exam, go with her to the doctor's office if she needs. Our community—taking care of each other—is our greatest strength.

Leslie Calman, Ph.D. is the executive director of the Mautner Project in Washington, D.C.

Equality: Think local this election season

Words/Rev. Darlene Nipper

My experience of friends and colleagues who are black and lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) is that most of us are law abiding, often church-going, hardworking people living in local communities as neighbors, friends, family members and colleagues. We are everywhere, from urban centers to suburban and rural areas. We face all of the challenges and opportunities that others face, and our experience simply being visible in this world is often met with vitriolic rhetoric, hatred and violence. I was sadly reminded of this when a colleague sent a statistic to me from the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' 2009 "LGBTQ Hate Violence Report," released last month, which found that 50 percent of all anti-LGBTQ bias murder victims in 2009 were people of color. Given the connections between and across communities, and the reality of our lives stretching across multiple identities, we have a unique opportunity this election cycle to act boldly from any corner of our lives and potentially affect all of our lives.

As I've heard talk about the midterm elections over these last few weeks and months, I've thought we've focused too heavily on Congress alone. I know that this Congress was going to be our panacea, but thinking of this Congress I can't help but remember the lyrics to the Janet Jackson song, "What Have You Done for Me Lately?" You know the lyrics: "Used to be a time when you would pamper me / used to brag about it all the time / your friends seem to think that you're so peachy keen / but my friends say neglect is on your mind / who's right?" Yes, having a strong progressive leadership in Congress is critical to advancing policies that are meaningful to our communities. Yes, we have major concerns that apparently only Congress can fully address. And I think we are giving entirely too much time and attention solely to Congress, which is likely to continue to have difficulty effectively passing legislation that results in anything resembling the full equality and security that we seek.

I have friends and/or family members who have nearly lost their homes because of economic insecurity, some who are unemployed because of discrimination, some who are hardworking but fear deportation due to their immigration status, and others who are federal employees and can't put their partners on their health insurance policy because of federal legal restrictions. Newsflash: The jury is still out on the 111th United States Congress. Yes, Congress is critical and we should give them ample attention in this cycle, but Congress isn't the only place where we need strong progressive leadership.

Thinking forward to the midterms and about the policymakers needed to effectively address the concerns of the multiple communities in which I live, I am reminded that 1) I have to vote; 2) I have to implore the people around me — including those on the cushions in the meditation halls and in the pews of the churches that I frequent — to vote with me; and 3) I have to remember that elusive notion of equality that I seek — though its impact stretches to the far ends of this country's borders and beyond — really begins at home.

That's why I think our midterm election focus should be on local and state leaders as much as it is on Congress. In this midterm cycle alone 46 states—all except Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia—will hold elections for state legislatures, and 37 governors will be elected

continued on page 27

Show us Your GLO

Words/Michael-Christopher

Maurice Jamal, the man who brought us such films as *Ski Trip*, *Dirty Laundry* and the series *Friends & Lovers*, is the force behind the first urban LGBT television network, GLO TV. This enormous undertaking is "the most important thing I've ever done," he says. "A course correction. A new chapter." Jamal's goal with GLO is to help create opportunities for others to tell their stories showing all of who and what we are.

Although we have a black president, we are in no way living in a post-racial society, and discrimination against sexual orientation also still exists—two things to overcome in television, an industry that clearly caters to white heterosexuals. "I have sat across from the presidents of every major network you think would be interested in this content: Logo, MTV, BET, TV1, HereTV, QTV, which is defunct now... and there's always sort of this, 'Oh that's really great—but not really what we do.' And for the gay channels I think the content has been too urban for them," Jamal says. Jamal thinks they're just not interested in telling the stories of people of color, which is evident in their lineups. He adds that even with all the people he's worked with at BET it's clear that the network is not open to featuring programming for gay America.

Despite the odds stacked against him, Jamal has pressed on. He took the advice of his pastor, who says that if you're trying to do something and don't like the results, then you need to do something different. "GLO represents that difference," he says. He also took a page from the many successful self-published authors who have "put on their good walking shoes," and he went from city to city, Pride to Pride, and talked up GLO. He also cites "denial" as a part of his process; he ignored how hard it really was going to be. Most importantly, with all the networks turning him down, he kept in mind that "just because somebody says 'no' doesn't mean that it's not a good idea," he says. "I'm not trying to get an automatic 'yes.'"

Jamal has been working in the entertainment industry since he was 13 years old, so he knows how to work a "no" into something better. A classically trained Shakespearean actor, the Oakland native started in theater, then wrote, directed and produced for the African-American Shakespeare Company and The National Black Actors' Group in the Bay Area.

Needing a new challenge, Jamal moved to New York, broke into film and television, then landed on *Chappelle's Show* as assistant director. One day, the executive producer found the script to *Ski Trip* in the office (Jamal had been sneaking in at night to make copies) and questioned Jamal about the project. After explaining he was working on his first film, she gave Jamal time off, insisting he pursue his dreams.

Years later, after selling the film to MTV, Jamal returned for a season and she told him he shouldn't come back. "She told me, 'You gotta keep doing what you do. You're on a trajectory.'" Jamal learned a valuable lesson from the experience. "We don't recognize how important our allies can be to us," he says. "[Many times] as gays and lesbians we don't give [others] an opportunity to support us because we assume the reaction is going to be negative."

After hours of hard work and "lots of caffeine," GLO will go live on September 3 and debut on the Internet with an ambitious 20 shows. Its next phases will include cable and on-demand programming. There will also be a distribution arm delivering music downloads and film on DVD. Some programming will cross all platforms, while others will only be available on cable and/or on-demand.

GLO boasts its share of star power. Some of the featured actors include Terrell Carter (*Zane's Sex Chronicles*), Rodney Chester (*Noah's Arc*), Ray Cunningham (*College Hill*), Jackée Harry (*Sister, Sister*; *Everybody Hates Chris*), DeMarco Majors (*Shirts & Skins*), Saaphyri (*Flava of Love*) and Sheryl Lee Ralph (*Moesha*).

Programming will include sitcoms, news, health and wellness, and docuseries. Jamal's *Friends & Lovers* will air on the network along with *Girl Power*, a reality competition program where lesbian filmmakers can have a film funded and shown on GLO. *I Am Hip-Hop* delves in the world of rap music and its precarious relationship with the gay community. On *Sex 2010* the network explores everything sexual, from the mysteries of lesbian sex to why men have sex in parks. GLO has also picked up the Internet series *Christopher Street* and *Drama Queenz*.

There is one type of show we wont see just yet on GLO. "As a kid my favorite job would be captain of the Enterprise," Jamal says. "I'd like to do a really good, interesting and compelling sci-fi show with gay characters. But it has to be done right."

Jamal's overall concern with the network is quality, staying true to the vision. He doesn't want anyone to watch just because its urban and gay. "I don't want viewership by default," he says. "I want them to watch it because it's good." And if it's good, we all shine.

For more information visit www.glotvnetwork.com.

Femme Men: On the Front Line?

Words/Steven G. Fullwood

Nobody messed with Tony. The first time I saw him I knew he was different. Dancer body Tony. Silly, loud Tony. Mess with him, and he would have put a hurting-on-you-for-certain Tony. Tonvy was three grades ahead of me. He was a good-looking, ropy thin brown boy who was born in tight blue basketball shorts that showed a little more than his mama would have liked. In the summer, Tony and his friends—I call them the Tonettes—would skate up and down my street, singing and dancing, laughing from the time I spotted them until the trio faded into the distance, an unofficial gay black boy parade 1974, in Toledo, Ohio.

Then there was Michael. This Clevelander came to Toledo to attend college. I sat behind him in English class. One day he caught me staring at him, and introduced himself and we became friends. Michael was a 2nd degree black belt and wore black nail polish on his toes. "Sweet" is what my father would have called him. Michael beat up a boy one day at school who called him a fag. Sweet put his black nail-polished foot in that boy's ass.

I knew why people were afraid of Tony and Michael. Here were two effeminate men—or femme men—who were themselves. Both exuded confidence. Both their demeanors announced: *I do not take mess from anyone, not you or your mama.* But allow me to back up. What exactly is a "femme" man?

I would describe a femme man as someone who identifies as or whose gender performance is decidedly female; it's a definition that is admittedly far from concrete. For example, while I exhibit effeminacies, and happily so, I do not consider myself a femme man. However, you might consider my emotional presence, optimistic life outlook and my singing like Chaka Khan as decidedly un-male.

Clearly your perspective, what you think of as truth, is solely about *you*—how you see and perceive and value your gender role. How you feel about gender roles and attitudes determines where I land—or fall and break—on a scale, subjective and riddled with complexity.

One thing that became evident as I conducted research for this article is that femme, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. While sexual identity is not an exclusive marker of effeminacy in males, the men I interviewed were same-gender-loving (SGL), gay or homo and a few identified as femme, or formerly femme. Each had overlapping ways of describing femme men and effeminacy similar to my own. A few of the men I approached for their opinions about femme men, who in fact appeared femme to me, were insulted by the inference. Why, I do not know, but I speculate that being seen as femme is... well, let's deal with our definitions first, shall we?

"A femme man is any man—gay, straight or bisexual—that is connected to his feminine side in manner, emotionally, psychologically or physically," says Tyrus, 30, who considers himself feminine yet masculine. Travis, 32, who identifies as femme, feels freedom to express himself "using whatever phrases, mannerisms or gestures" strike him. "Some of those [qualities] are definitely feminine," he adds. "Having a little sugar in your tank may be fine, but femme is when people can see the sugar before they taste it," said Clarence, 30, who also identifies as femme. "It is in my case the sashay of my swag, the untraditionally high voice, the melody in my tone and the expressiveness of my hand gestures. It is my expression of self that is contrary to the idea that men are stiff, not expressive."

"Society and our black gay culture have decided and constructed what it means to be masculine—not a man, really—and I don't fall into that construct," says Clarence thoughtfully. He paraphrases another black gay feminine man, author James Baldwin, when he says, '"I am black only so long as you think that you are white.'"

"I would define 'femme' as having an identity that revels in performing the social definitions of what is gendered feminine," says Kenyon, 35, who at one time defined himself as femme. "It could be the way you walk, talk, how you dress, gesture, the way you view the world and power." Nigel, 31, believes that "a femme man I guess would be someone who is masculine in body only, with everything else being 'feminine,' dress, posture, speech, etc."

"I embody both essences," Charly, 29, says. He considers himself both masculine and feminine. "I prefer to feel what I feel when I feel it. When I am most comfortable I display femininity; and when I have to go out into the unknown, leave my house, [possibly] meet new people, and maybe defend myself, I display masculinity."

A masculine presence is undoubtedly an asset in a sexist culture. Instinctively I knew this as a child. As a kid I was teased for being feminine. From what I gather now it was centered not solely in what I did (express myself) but how I did it (with a flair.) Perpetually pressured to "act male" by my father, relatives and any random man who saw fit to regulate my behavior, I struggled mightily to be seen as masculine, often failing at it. Instead of roughhousing, I much preferred to sing along with Diana Ross and Sylvester. Unlike Tony and Michael, I knew I had no such fierceness burning inside, or a degree in karate with which to protect myself.

"I am masculine because it is my warrior self, it is who I have to become to blend in, to deal with my exterior world," says Charly. "The masculine is my force field; it is my protection, it is my rock that I hide under, and it is what repels things and people that can hurt me."

That hurt manifested—for me, anyway—in looking on men like Michael and Tony with a mix of awe, wonder and resentment. How dare they be who they are? I chose not to. I saw their sense of freedom as too risky. This bird of a feather simply ignored that flock altogether. That feeling of disconnect stunted me emotionally, and it took some time for me to develop strong and meaningful connections with other men.

"The premium is on acting heterosexual," says Travis, who points out the complications and contradictions on how masculine and femme members of

continued on page 27

BRIAN SLADE aka Ton3x *Dawn o' the Unicorn*

Sometimes when life gets you down, you wish you could be somebody else. There's no denying the high-profile and highly criticized gospel superstar Ton3x has had more than his share of stress the past year. Losing a number of loved ones, taking over his late father's ministry, and coming out and being okay with his sexuality could have been enough to drive him over the edge. Instead, all that intense activity created something else: a whole new musical expression called Brian Slade.

Dawn o' the Unicorn is most likely the project Ton3x dreamed about for years (or had hidden for years). Although most of his prior work has pushed the limits of contemporary gospel, it still had that smiley, hopeful, "God gon' make it all right" feel to it. *Unicorn* has allowed him to musically express anger, love, hope and yes, his hair, in ways he's never been able to before. Beginning with the highly dramatic "Unicorn," Brian Slade leads us through his intended theme: Creative types, such as vocalists, dancers, makeup artists, stylists and hairdressers are beautiful, unique and misunderstood creatures. And apparently extremely *fierce*.

"Secret Admirer" is an incredibly intense visitation to '80s new wave/electro-funk with a sprinkle of hip-hop swag. In the track Slade taunts his haters with "Nothin' lookin' like me / nothin' soundin' like me / no one dressin' like me." This is true. Musically, even Prince would be green with envy. While Prince has resorted to imitating his past self (and not doing a very good job of it) with a Jehovah's Witness sensibility, Slade has taken what the Purple One started 30 years ago and did what Prince hasn't been able to do since: Make it current. Now the look: Presumably, Ton3x borrowed the name "Brian Slade" from *Velvet Goldmine*, a 1998 British/American film based on David Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust" glam rock character. In the film, Slade is also gay. On the promo material, Ton3x's Slade dons a black leather jacket accessorized with rings, bracelets and other assorted bling, with a Joan Jett hairdo. *Fierce.*

Most notable about "Secret Admirer" is the parallel to another mega-gospel artist, now an ex-gay, who's been very vocal regarding Ton3x coming out. To him, Slade sings, "I already know you're my secret admirer / privately you want to be me, yeah / I already know you're my secret admirer / publicly you want to hate me, yeah." But the best part is when Slade dares, "try this on for size," then busts a crazy, high octave vocal run. Fierce, yet again.

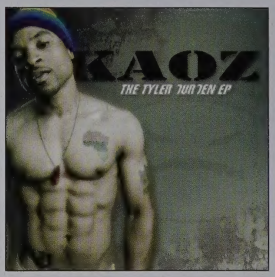
Other *Unicorn* highlights include the dance track "Justify My Love," which further solidifies Slade's independence, originality and fabulosity. "Glamour," mainly a funkified rap song starring Ton3x's rap persona, T. Bizzy, features three-part falsetto harmonies that would make Barry and Robin Gibb envious. The 10-minute jam "Get Over You" fuses the patented Sound of Philadelphia with modern-day ballroom flair, cat calls and all.

Although this project could be seen as Ton3x's coming out party, it falls short of being a same-gender-loving outing. *Unicorn* could have been the first CD by a major out recording artist to include an SGL love song. "Sunset," the CD's ethereal closing slow jam, comes close. In it, Slade and his boo are driving along Pacific Coast Highway, love in full bloom catching the last orange rays of the day. He goes back and forth from speaking to the listener to his significant other, so when he sings the line, "and he's wearing your favorite cologne," we're not entirely sure how that fits into his sexy ride.

Still, *Unicorn* is a top-notch project no matter what the orientation.—*MC*

Preview it at www.myspace.com/brianslade.

KAOZ *The Tyler Durden EP / The Tyler Durden Mixtape*



If you like classic hip-hop, you'll be all over *The Tyler Durden EP/Mixtape*, the new releases by spoken word artist—but "rapper first"—Kaoz. By day, Kevin "Kaoz" Moore manages Minneapolis HIV education programs; his rap is very much an extension of that. Just as he gives youth the life skills they need to survive, his music also feeds souls and minds, a task he's more than willing to take on.

Kaoz has an obvious love for hip-hop, but first and foremost he loves his community. As Kevin Moore, he created Silence Equals Suicide, a showcase of spoken word artists performing original HIV/AIDS-themed works. He also received the National AIDS Education Services for Minorities (NAESM) Award of Excellence in Youth Leadership in 2007.

The Tyler Durden EP gets its name from the Brad Pitt character in the film *Fight Club*. The film's "Tyler" went way against the grain and wasn't afraid to stand up for what he believed in—no matter how intense, absurd or disturbing. Kaoz is just as fearless in his music and his role as out hip-hop artist.

Tyler Durden is an extremely listenable CD which will please true hip-hop fans. The mellow acoustic beats are as cleverly crafted as the lyrics; they're a sharp contrast from the raucous, grimy beats we hear in today's mainstream rap. Kaoz spits like a pro—and he is. He has a knack for telling stories with his rhymes, painting vivid pictures and exploring new ideas. At first listen, rap historians might think they're listening to the legendary CL Smooth, but after a few covert lines like "assign a point guard / drive it to the basket / but you dribble like warm fudge / I'm about to pack it," one might think again.

The EP opens with "Thieves in the Temple," a track describing what happens when people who think it's their job to service anything that moves wake up to find they have nothing. "White Girl" appears to be a tale reliving the ups and downs of interracial love. Digging deeper into lines like "I inhaled her seed" and "I sold her to others only to steal her back," we find Kaoz disclosing a dark period from seven years ago. After becoming unemployed, a not-so-enlightened young Kevin Moore chose to sell cocaine. For six months he was hooked on his own product; it took almost two years to get clean. He admits that, like any addiction, it's a daily battle. He calls the song his anti-drug song, "straight from the horse."

Kaoz also waxes poetic, throwing some spoken word in the mix. "The Boy Next Door" tells the tale of two teenage boys weaving in and out of the complexities of being same-gender loving in the urban Midwest. One endures homophobic abuse while his closeted friend increases the distance, realizing too late that a splash of courage and true friendship may have prevented his friend's suicide. The moving piece serves as Kaoz's tribute/apology to the gay kids that caught hell in high school while his own perceived masculinity kept him under the radar.

Kaoz can get deep but he's also got a sense of humor, which can be heard on "I Loved Loosey," a warning to bottomless bottoms: "Feels like I dived into the deep end of a pool / life jacket no where to be found / and no help." On "AntiOut," which is on the EP's companion mixtape, Kaoz pokes fun at rappers on the down low.

Whether he's community activist or MC, make no mistake, Kevin "Kaoz" Moore knows what he's doing and more importantly what he's here to do: Make a difference and make great music.—*MC*

Preview it at www.kaozonline.com and www.reverbnation.com/kevinkaozmoore.

MAKE IT REIGN

Words/Dede Newby
Photo/Exclusively by Thai

When compared to most female hip-hop artists today, Ace Reign does not fit the typical image. With her long, black dreadlocks, white T-shirt, baggy jeans and white Nike Air Forces, it seems sex is not what she is interested in selling. Ace feels strongly that her musical talent speaks for itself. Her fans and admirers agree, and Ace's first release, *When It Reigns It Pours, Volume 1*, is already attracting notice from music industry professionals.

Ace, born April Winston in Washington, D.C., has been writing poetry as long as she can remember. "I used to write a lot of love poems," she says, "but after listening to such artists as Queen Latifah, MC Lyte and Trina, I decided to try rapping my poems." After studying Queen Latifah's hit, "U.N.I.T.Y.," and the vocals of MC Lyte, Ace stepped up her game and created her first song at age 12, titled "Raw." Ace's face lights up as she talks about the birth of her first original piece. "I still remember all the words," she says with a smile.

When It Reigns It Pours, Volume 1 provides a little of everything for listeners—from R&B to rock, a touch of classical and a splash of house, polished by traditional hip-hop throughout. The best way to describe her blend of music is "an old school sound with a new school swagger," Ace says. "I think my music will appeal to the masses. There is something in it for everyone."

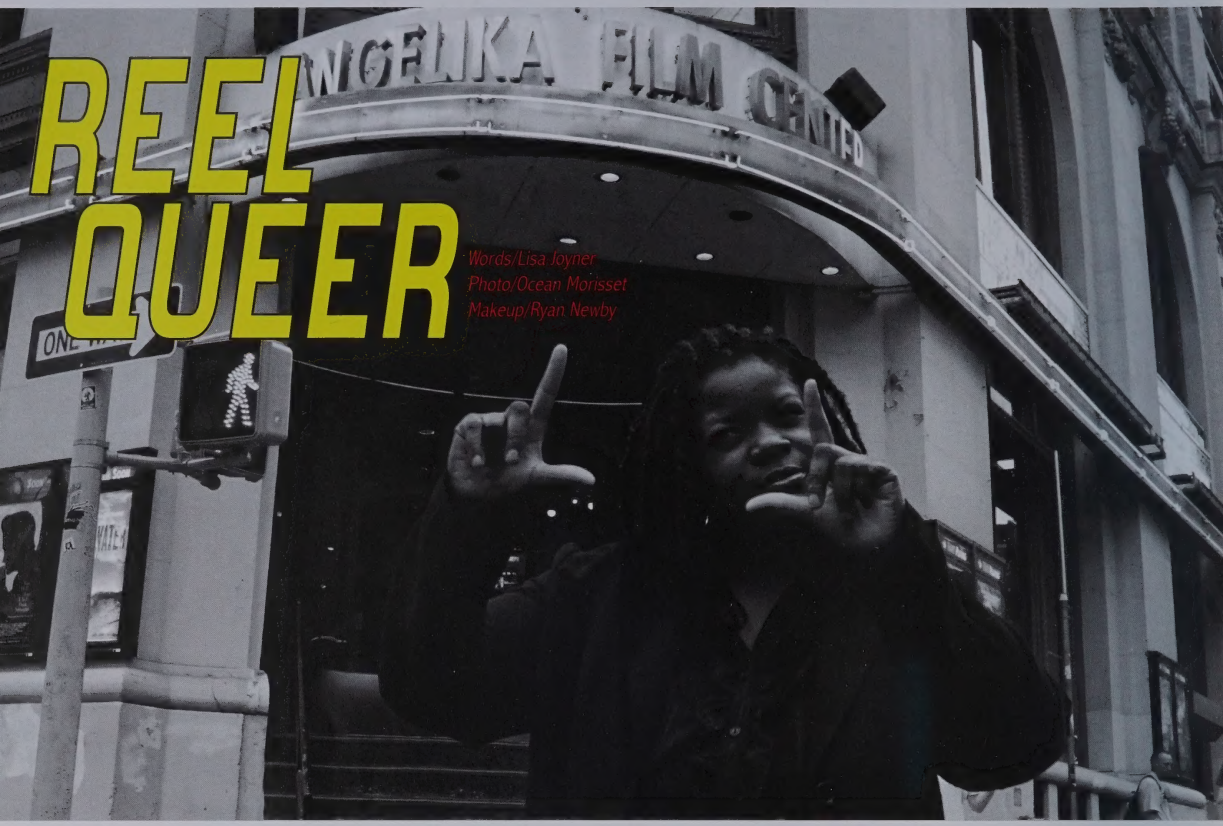
As a lyricist, she is not afraid to tackle sensitive topics in her music. For instance, "Beyond the Surface" addresses the judgmental views of people in society. "We all are made in God's image," Ace says, "but we are so judgmental toward each other, [to the point of] sometimes not really seeing the real blessings that are right in front of us." Yet, according to Ace, her music is something "you can bounce and pop bottles to or just relax."

Eighteen-year-old Kne'Elle Scott agrees with Ace's sentiments. She recently had the privilege of seeing Ace perform at Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center at South Carolina Black Pride's 2010 Community Expo. "I really like her music," Scott says. "When I first heard it, it caught my attention—the beats and her lyrics. If she comes out with another CD, I would buy it." Sheila Clifton from Rockhill, S.C. adds, "Her music is a new way to say it's time for something new. Her music is different, but understandable."

Copywrite, a well-respected underground hip-hop artist, recently praised Ace's craft. "For a female artist, Ace Reign is a great lyricist. When I first heard her, I was blown away." Rob Stern, a world-renowned producer and audio engineer, agrees: "Her voice is golden and she writes amazing lyrics," he says. Ace, Stern and electronic dance music producer Josh Gabriel co-produced "Candy Coated Whip" for the mixtape. Ace has also recently recorded "This Love" for House DJ Sander Kleinenberg's CD *5K*, to be released on Little Mountain Records on Sept. 13, 2010.

Kameelah Vose, CEO of Kamby Management Group, which represents Ace, says that she expects to see some great things from Ace. According to Vose, Ace "is genuine and does music for the love and not the financial award. She is a genius, [and] talented and gifted as a lyricist. She possesses a distinctive voice. Her music will appeal to both young and older hip hop fans."

For more information about Ace Reign, visit sonicbids.com/acereign or facebook.com/pages/ace-reign/127485353937129. To purchase her CD, e-mail acereign@gmail.com.



REEL QUEER

Words/Lisa Joyner
Photo/Ocean Morisset
Makeup/Ryan Newby

On a small red stool in the back of Lucky's, a burger joint not far from Greenwich Village, New York's infamous gay neighborhood, I awaited the arrival of Angel Brown-Ross, creator of the Queer Black Cinema (QBC) International Film Festival that takes place each year in Harlem. Brown-Ross, born and raised in Queens, N.Y., currently lives in Brooklyn. A filmmaker and film editor, she taught music and video production for seven years, and is a member of New York Women in Film & Television. After thirty minutes in walks a thick, brown woman. She aims a guilty smile in my direction, apologizes and begins to run off train logistics that in my lifetime I will never understand. I suggest that she get herself settled, order some food, and begin. She does and we do.

SWERV: Did you get your film editing background from college?

Angel Brown-Ross: I went to school for music. I was on that route of being, you know, this music professor. I went to Tanzania, East Africa, and prior to leaving my mom gave me a camera. She said, "I never gave you anything. I always gave to other kids more than you, so, here you go." I took it with me on the trip, started filming everything, and got hit with the bug.

I took some workshops at the Harlem Screenwriters Workshop. Then I studied under Michelle Materre and Sam Pollard, who taught [workshops] at Third World Newsreel. So, I didn't go the traditional route of becoming a filmmaker. I am, for the most part, self-taught. I worked my way up sets, from being a production assistant to [being] assistant director (AD). Then I wrote my first short, *Desperate for Love*.

I always liked films; I always went to film festivals. I saw there was a lack of black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT) representation here in New York; I created a monthly series. Eventually that monthly series turned into an annual film festival.

SWERV: That's how the QBC International Film Festival came about?

ABR: Umm hmm. I kinda sorta ran out of films. I was like, "OK, what am I going to do with some of this footage?" It's a monthly series. It's kind of hard finding films; very challenging, but it's not impossible. So I said, "If I start a film festival, the films that I collect for the film festival I can use for the monthly film series throughout the year." ...I also did college tours, especially women's events. We have a show called Faces of Black Women where we honor pioneer black lesbian filmmakers. The idea was to show some lesbian films but to also show emerging lesbian films, bring the pioneer filmmaker in, have a Q&A, and show them our appreciation. Last year we began giving out an award.

SWERV: Is this done during the film festival?

ABR: This is a separate event that happens in March during Women's Month. It did not happen this year. This is the first time in four years that it did not happen, due to budget cuts.

QBC International Film Festival is

not my livelihood. That's something that I do on the side, though it takes up a lot of my time. My livelihood is editing, shooting, directing, producing, and graphic designing. If I don't do that, I don't bring any money in to pay my bills and live. [But QBC] is my passion.

SWERV: Do you find there to be such a shortage of films that you feel it necessary to accept every film submitted to the festival?
ABR: Oh, my God. Thank you so much for asking this question. Absolutely not! I am a curator. There is a difference, and this is no disrespect to non-film festivals, i.e. Prides or anything like that. The whole process is different. I have submission forms. I'm looking for quality stuff.

In order for me to play with the big boys/girls, you have to come up with some quality stuff. You can't say, "Why aren't you showing more people of color films?" You can't say, "Here are some films," and then the films are crappy, the sound is not good, and the quality of production is not good. You can't say that to a Sundance. You can't say that to Outfest, Urban Festival, ABFF [American Black Film Festival]. Regardless if it's gay or straight, you can't say that when you talk of quality of substance. So with this festival, I am trying to get people to step it up.

SWERV: I saw that last year you showed Tina Mabry's* Mississippi Damned, *and Faith Trimmel's* Family. *I actually interviewed them both. Do you know which films will show at the festival this year?
ABR: Well, we just finished our call for submissions and we are going through films [now]. We are still looking for more films. We have a section in festival called First Works. The First Works don't necessarily have to be as good as *Mississippi Damned*. You've seen that film?

SWERV: Yes. Excellent movie!
ABR: The film doesn't have to be 100% excellent. It's [got to be] that promising filmmaker who makes you say, "Wow, this is one to look at." It is someone who is really going to make a mark on the industry though they are not there yet.

SWERV: What are the clues?
ABR: It's kind of what Michael Jackson said, "You just have to feel it." For example, one of the filmmakers who submitted their film, I saw their process. They actually did a short and chose to do it all over again. That says a lot—for you to complete a short already, and then to start all over and do it again? That shows me that you are very passionate, want to get this right and be taken seriously. You are serious about your craft.

SWERV: Does it mean that they're good, though?
ABR: No, but for the most part [the film] is good. It's not a *Mississippi Damned* or a *Brooklyn's Bridge to Jordan*...but it's up there.

SWERV: Is the QBC International Film Festival still connected to a music festival? I previously saw it listed as the QBC International Film and Music Festival.
ABR: The first year I did the film festival it was "and music," because remember, I have a very strong background in music. When I got a sponsor, the first time they actually gave me money for the festival, they suggested I should take the music part out and develop the festival first, then add the music later. I thought that was smart, because the way I envision the film festival was to have music concerts at this festival as well as films.

Last year I took a lot of steps backward. I used to have a monthly film series; I stopped that so that I could focus on the film festival. ...Focus on one thing, make it really good, big and nice and just add as it grows.

One thing I didn't want to change was "International." [Last year] I showed work from [filmmaker] Campbell. [You can learn more about Campbell at www.blackmanvision.com.] This year I will show *Society*, which is a South African Lesbian series that is very successful in South Africa. They combined two episodes into one so that they can travel the film festival with it. I am opening the film festival with *A Changing of Guards*, which is a film out of the Bahamas.

SWERV: Let's talk about your film magazine.
ABR: It's called *Cinematiq*. I changed the "c" to a "q," because I wanted to represent queer.

It basically gives you a distinct and unique perspective of black LGBT cinema. In this magazine you will see articles on *Mississippi Damned* or, let's say, *Precious*. The lesbian couple in *Precious*, you know, those characters were pretty much washed over. You didn't hear much about them in the mainstream media, which bothered me, because they played such a pivotal role in the process of her moving forward with her life. No one really talked about that. I'm trying to create a magazine where we can talk about this. I want to talk about *Death at a Funeral* where the father was gay. How did the family react to that? On top of these different film reviews [there are] also how-to articles.

SWERV: Are you single, Angel?
ABR: (laughter)

SWERV: That's always my last question.
ABR: I don't know if I want to answer that question...

The QBC International Film Festival takes place Oct. 14-17, 2010 at the National Black Theatre in Harlem, N.Y. Last year more than fifteen movies (1,500 tickets sold) were shown over the course of four days.

To learn more, visit www.queerblackcinema.org, or www.cinematiqmag.com.

THE WAY I SEE IT

Words/Rob Smith

The scene played out in slow motion. As I looked up at the server of one of New York City's never-ending supply of expensive restaurants that seems to specialize in mediocre food, I saw his expression: a mixture of disdain and sadness, his eyebrows lifted up in slight dismay. "I'm sorry sir, but your card has been declined," he said. Mortified, I felt the chill of deep embarrassment spread up my legs and into the pit of my stomach.

I looked guiltily at the members of my sports team that had invited me out—the ones with duplexes on the Upper West Side and homes in Long Island. The ones with money. I should've known better when my restaurant suggestion of Chipotle was scoffed at. Perhaps I should've declined those two glasses from the bottle of wine that was split evenly among the table. Alas, I didn't, sure that my Capital One Visa would be there to save me. Emergency, indeed.

A few apologies and a quick trip to the ATM later, I said my good-byes as they headed to a popular bar in the midtown gayborhood, undoubtedly to rack up a bar tab that was roughly the size of my weekly grocery budget. As I walked down 8th Avenue past the succession of clothing stores I began to look at my gay brethren walking up the street in my direction. I looked intently at their Prada sunglasses, their $75 haircuts, their Universal Gear shopping bags and their Puma shoes. I wondered, not for the first time, where in the *hell* all their money was coming from. Trust funds? Great stocks? Side jobs as professional escorts? Or were they really just fabulous super-gays with amazing jobs and boatloads of disposable income?

For some reason, talking about money has become the ultimate taboo. Gays talk freely and openly about giving BJs, but watch your back if you ask about their IRA. Why is that? Have we become so inundated with the myth of the super-wealthy, fabulous gay that we feel an immense pressure to live up to it? After all, studies have shown time and time again that gay men and women earn less, on average, than their straight counterparts.

After two and a half years of living hand to mouth in one of the most expensive cities in the world, it was enough to make me feel despondent. I'm an H&M boy in a D&G world, and chasing dreams of writing, speaking and making a difference doesn't buy a full-floor penthouse duplex on 16th Street. I began to wonder about the motivation for life, the motivation to work, and some of the joy we sacrifice in order to have "nice things." The point had been made a few months earlier during a conversation over (a $30) brunch with a friend of a friend. "Look," he said, deep brown eyes fixed intensely on mine, "I like having nice stuff. I like going to brunch. I like having a cute apartment. So what if I hate my job? At least I'm making money."

But is making money really what it's all about? Is the be-all and end-all of gay culture simply to strive toward the upper middle-class comforts that allow us to be as fashionable as the characters on *Noah's Arc*, have a penthouse apartment like Carrie Bradshaw, or to take the trips on the Atlantis cruises and Black Pride excursions advertised in the pages of magazines like *Out*, *Instinct* and, yes, *SWERV*? I'm not so sure anymore, especially not as I prepare to leave a cushy advertising job with the potential for a six-figure income to pursue a different career simply because it makes me feel purposeful and fulfilled.

When I got the idea for this column, I was afraid to write it. I was afraid to break the middle-class illusion that my doorman apartment (rented), sporadically cute clothes (H&M, Gap and vintage) and nights out to dinner (courtesy of Groupon.com) had helped me create for so long. An illusion, perhaps, that was never bought by anyone as well as it was aggressively sold by me. Perhaps as gay men we're all Lords of Illusion, projecting images of money, power, wealth and style so that nobody looks close enough to realize that it's all a game.

When I look back at all that I've thought about and gone through in the past few months since the incident at the restaurant, I think maybe that was why I finally decided to forfeit. I don't really have expensive clothes, or go out to expensive dinners, but that's OK. I cook at home, get great deals on clothes, and am an absolute beast at finding a good happy hour deal in New York City. I'm also more content in my life and work than I have been in years.

Even though I'm young and broke, I feel *fabulous*.

Rob Smith is a freelance writer located in New York City. He's written for USA Today, The Huffington Post, *and* AfterElton.com. *He is currently working on a memoir detailing his tenure as a gay soldier in the U.S. Army. Contact him at robsmithvet@gmail.com and twitter.com/robsmithonline.*

FEMME MEN continued from page 21

the SGL community see and characterize each other. "On the one hand many folks—even gays and femmes—see femme as weak and negative, and then we often celebrate hyper black femininity and divas," he says.

Clarence concurs. "The more masculine you are the more valued and desired you are and the more femme you are the less valuable and desirable you are—socially and romantically," he says. "In that, there is some internalized homophobia, some sheer discomfort with self, some lack of progress being made by a community of black men who could gain from each other but don't." Clarence rightfully perceives that this construct that many black men have built is sealed "with ignorance and keeps other black men out and everyone locked in a bad place."

While Tyrus feels similarly, he also is witness to what he sees as a change—if only superficially—occurring in traditional gender biases among black queer men. "Until recently, the black queer community ranked the femme man similarly to a transgendered individual, who is often at the bottom of the queer totem pole," he remarks. "Now I see a desire and lust for feminine men. I reside in Harlem and there is a new gay renaissance occurring. You notice the 'straight men' checking out the boys pumping down 125th Street and looking at them long and hard. A femme man, when partnered with a man who considers himself masculine, I think he makes them feel more dominant. A masculine man doesn't long for another masculine man; he longs for the softer, daintier individual."

While I am not sure about what Tyrus is suggesting—masculine men and their quest for femininity as a complement—what I do recognize is how powerful the male/female dynamic is and how people, through nature or nurture, reach for it. However, we are born of a physical male and a physical female, and so we possess the spiritual, emotional and sometimes physical resources of each. This powerful if confounding fact is often ignored or obscured in blaring, misleading and harmful social constructs that tell us about being alive, but more about how to act. And so while so-called opposites attract and may be a *preference* for some, it is not exclusive nor reveals our complex nature if relieved of social expectation and regulation.

Femme men are attracted to me and I to them. A few of them have become good friends, and others have become lovers. One particular femme man I dated was exceptionally in tune with what he felt, wanted and desired. I have wondered if his effeminacy—his delicate gestures, smart dressing and emotional maturity—made me feel like a "man." Man, in my case, is defined as less delicate and in utter denial of my feelings. The main impression he left me with required me to more carefully consider my own wants and desires, be forthcoming with my thoughts, and perhaps dress a bit better.

"I am open to the possibilities," says Clarence when asked if he would date other femme men. "I am a same-gender-loving man. I understand what gender is, loving is and what manhood is. None of those things are contingent on the construct of masculinity or effeminacy."

"I love femme guys because I love the femme qualities in men," says Charly. "I want to touch, protect, and kiss, sex, explore and protect them, just as I wish to have someone do to my feminine side."

Kenyon's trajectory from femme to perhaps *less* femme is not only a matter of the beholder, but also reflected in his preferences.

"I have mostly also been a top in my sexual life and have tended to attract butch bottoms. But in my older age I am less femme-identified, and I am approached, and, well, fuck/date more femme men," he said. "But mostly now the men I tend to date are more like me, more a balance of the two."

"I think I have learned, though, to really respect, admire and be attracted to both feminine and masculine energy for the different but important things they bring to the table," Travis said, adding that "I think queer men of color are quite capable of making that a quality we all share."

"I stopped trying to trap some homothug hoping he would validate me and being ashamed of putting my hands on my hips," he said.

What strikes me most in my reflection on femme men, particularly Tony and Michael, is that they were men in the best sense of the word. In my evolution of what I hope to be—open, free, beautiful—my journey has been aided and nurtured by men who were femme, or at the very least, not afraid to be feminine. Unlike a great deal of the self-proclaimed *men's* men in my life, femme men have offered me the types of experiences that Charly describes as "sensual, emotional, manicured, pretty, light, joyous, colorful, alluring," and this I love and appreciate dearly. While traditionally masculine men have their gifts, femme men point to what's possible. Their energy tends to unlock doors, not shut them. Nigel rightfully calls femme men the vanguard. "Like trannies, they can't hide or 'shift' out of form. They are our soldiers," he says. Uncelebrated warriors. Until now.

THINK LOCAL continued from page 19

in 2010. These next state leaders will have numerous opportunities to affect our lives, including that once-in-a-decade chance — depending on which party is in control — to be a part of redrawing the Congressional districts after the 2010 census. This redistricting will impact all of us for at least the next decade, but given the history of incumbency, undoubtedly for far beyond. And these leaders will have the chance to effect change through ordinances and legislation ranging from legalization of medical marijuana to passing local non-discrimination ordinances protecting transgender community members and, in some states, laws that will approve or ban same-sex relationship recognition and/or adoption. Let's not forget Arizona law SB1070 and the many copycat laws that are pending. The acts of local and state legislative bodies have enormous implications for how we live our daily lives. From district buildings to state houses to the nation's capital, we need legislators and policymakers who understand our needs and who will act accordingly.

That's why voting this November will be one of the single most important actions each of us can take. The equality and security we seek begins at home. We aren't the only ones voting. Our family members and prayer partners, our neighbors and colleagues, our friends and our acquaintances are all voting, too. All of us need to work locally and nationally through volunteering and voting, going door to door, and phone-banking, to ensure that there is a progressive leadership in office that is not afraid to act on behalf of our communities at home, in our state houses and city halls, and on Capitol Hill.

All across this country African-American and other ethnicities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people are facing the daily challenges of caring for their families under the heavy cloak of ongoing stigma and discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender expression and racial identity. Let's put our collective shoulders to the wheel during this election cycle and work for a progressive leadership at the local, state and national levels that will legislate to ensure justice, and guarantee equality for us all.

Rev. Darlene Nipper is the deputy executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and an ordained interfaith minister.

 continued from page 11

agenda. I can't imagine why I would start now. It is to me a movement spoon-fed to us that was picked up by some "capital G" gays with "normalcy" as its goal—again. To date [same-sex marriage] is not something that has been particularly important to me. That said, do I think we all deserve equal protection under the law? Yes. Am I insanely attached to ritual? Yes. Do I possibly believe in everlasting love? Yes. And do I love throwing a good party more than almost anything else? Yes. Plus, I like to get dressed. So don't get me wrong. I'm happy to get invited to a good wedding. I'd maybe one day get coaxed into having one. But right now, I'm interested in a movement with actual equality as its goal: access to a living wage, the preservation of public space, the decentralization of wealth, and the decriminalization of our youth. Otherwise, it would seem to me that we'd be signing on as complicit participants in a system still very much configured for our actual demise, not well-being. Also, let's face it: I'm busy and tired, and Daddy's getting a lil' old; if I'm gonna get it up to fight I have to pick my battles. The fight for marriage equality does not seem to me to be the best use of my skills/time/effort, but ya know, it takes all kinds.

SWERV: What's your secret to maintaining such a beautiful, long-standing relationship?

TR: Commitment. Bob committed to our daughter first. She told her that no matter what happened in our relationship she knew she would be a part of Tashawn's life forever. It is hard work. We have committed to the process of being together in the world. She is one of the best people I have ever met. I am in awe of her creativity and purpose. She is really good-looking, a great cook and an amazing dancer. She loves House music. She has spent the last few years being the chair of the board for Fierce (www.fiercenyc.org) in addition to all of the other work she does. I really love her; I really like her. I am willing to do what it takes to be with her. Not always easy, but always worth it.

SWERV: As a BBW [big beautiful woman], how does all the media and cultural emphasis on size ring for you, and have you found this conversation creeping into lesbian circles?

TR: I have never looked to the media as a yardstick for who I should be in the world,

Photo/Bernie DeChant

or what I should look like. [That's a] spirit death for black women. For the majority of the time we have been on the globe and there has been a "media," they have gotten us wrong and have never fully appreciated or celebrated our gifts and diversity. Now that there have been some wonderful publications, TV shows, etc. presented by people of color, I still find the view too narrow.

I think the biggest concern for me [about] being big is health. I have always been big. I love my body. I also love being alive. Good health and self-love through good health is important. This does not mean I will ever be a skinny person, but that is a goal for me. Over the last few years I have lost weight every year, going down three pants sizes 'til my daughter yelled at me to buy new pants because my clothes were too big and I looked stupid. So, again, my goal is not to be skinny, but to strive for good health—because I love my life and when I die, I want it to be because I am very old. I have always felt beautiful and I do not enjoy compliments about weight loss. I know folks are obsessed over a certain kind of beauty. I saw the beautifully sculpted brother on the cover of one of your magazines. That is how it is and for me, as I said before, I feel good inside the body I have.

As for lesbians, I think the same issue affects our community. I do find more support for women of size in our community. I also think that is because there are a lot of activists in our community and a strong willingness to fight against discrimination. Now that lesbians have taken strong roles in the media, it is fun to see some little bits of diversity seeping into the mainstream, although I would like more, more, more.

SWERV: You've worked with some pretty incredible musicians as a producer, including Chocolate Genius, Sweet Honey in the Rock, and most recently with Lizz Wright on* Fellowship*—always to high acclaim. Has it gotten any better for women producers and why do you think there are so few?

TR: Why do I think there are so few? Because women can't do it? (Laughter) I am being sarcastic. Come on now, it takes a movement to change the imbalance of systems that have worked so hard to keep the field from being diverse. I think men dominate the producer end of the music business. I have inched my way in. Working with Lizz on *Fellowship* is the first time I have produced on a *major* label. It drops Sept. 28, 2010.

SWERV: What's next for your band, Big Lovely; your label; and Toshi Reagon?

TR: I am in the studio with my drummer, Robert Burke [of the group The Duke and the King]. We are producing my next studio record. I am also mixing the Big Lovely live record. I am looking forward to Lizz's release. I am doing a show with Lizz and my mom next spring at the Schomburg [Center for Research in Harlem, N.Y.] celebrating the music of Odetta. Work, work, work, all the time. Music, music, music, all the time.

Advancing an Agenda for Research, Policy, and Service in the Interest of Black Gay Men

BGRG

The Black Gay Research Group

The Black Gay Research Group responds to the National HIV/AIDS Strategy

The Black Gay Research Group (BGRG) welcomes the release of the first National HIV/AIDS Strategy for the United States. We are heartened by the efforts on the part of President Barack Obama and his administration to allocate resources toward fighting the AIDS epidemic in the United States. Of particular note is the vision for the National HIV/AIDS strategy which rightly focuses on prevention of new HIV infections and ensuring access to "high quality, life-extending care, free from stigma and discrimination" for those who do become infected. As a group of researchers, advocates, and community service providers, we are pleased that the comprehensive plan recognizes the importance of sound research and community based approaches to reducing HIV infections. Most importantly, we applaud language in the plan that indicates that communities most disproportionately affected by the epidemic will have access to appropriate resources to combat it. Black men who have sex with men (MSM) communities are most disproportionately affected by the domestic epidemic, and we believe that this report augurs well for ensuring that this community is sufficiently supported in its fight against HIV.

Yet, while we are pleased with the report overall, there are some core issues remaining that we strongly believe must be addressed as the nation moves toward implementing this plan. The report rightly mentions that fighting HIV among Blacks is not mutually excusive with fighting HIV among gay and bisexual men; however, we offer caution at the report's presentation of these categories of lived experience as separate. For Black MSM, race, culture, and sexuality are inextricably intertwined and create a psychosocial experience that is unique and not an additive result of being Black and being gay or bisexual. Therefore, to reduce the HIV related health disparities in this community, there must be a focus on addressing structural factors involving racism, homophobia, and other macro and micro level impediments that permeate the lives of Black MSM in addition to specific interventions that are culturally grounded and based on rigorous scientific, culturally specific, methodological approaches. Reducing HIV infections in gay and bisexual men as well as in Black communities cannot occur without addressing the specificity of the experiences of Black MSM and creating interventions that meet their particular needs. Furthermore, the National HIV/AIDS strategy, particularly with respect to Black MSM, cannot be successfully implemented without the allocation of additional Federal funds

The National HIV/AIDS Strategy is a much-needed step in the right direction toward addressing the epidemic in the United States. We offer the following recommendations that we believe are key to successful implementation of the plan:

- Recognize that the needs of Black MSM as a group should be addressed specifically and that it should not
  be assumed that this group will be sufficiently reached through efforts targeted to the Black community or
  gay and bisexual men.
- Utilize researchers who are reflective of the communities disproportionately affected by the epidemic.
- Identify, train, and develop researchers and community leaders who are reflective of the communities disproportionately affected by the epidemic.

Provide additional funds from the Federal Government in order to implement the plan. We look forward to collaborating with all the stakeholders involved to ensure that the implementation plan for the National HIV/AIDS Strategy is successful.

The BGRG was founded in 2001 in an effort to strengthen, empower and provide a network for Black gay researchers and community workers/activists. Its mission is to advance an agenda of research, policy and service in the interests of Black gay men. More information about the BGRG can be found at www.bgrg-international.org.

September 12-15, 2010
United States Conference on AIDS (USCA)
Orlando, FL

The National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC) presents the largest AIDS-related gathering in the U.S., bringing together over 3,000 workers from all fronts of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
www.2010USCA.org

September 17-19, 2010
2nd Annual Black Lesbians United Retreat
Malibu, CA

A celebration of women of African descent who love other women. Women from throughout the U.S. and abroad come to experience this unique event.
www.blacklesbiansunited.org

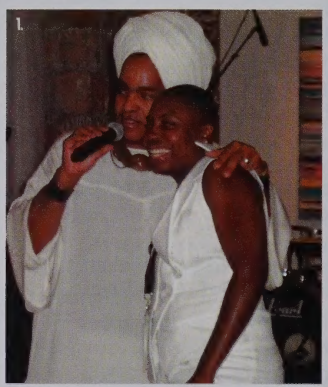
October 6-11, 2010
11th Annual Black Gay & Lesbian Pride Caribbean Cruisin'
New Orleans, LA to Cozumel, Mexico

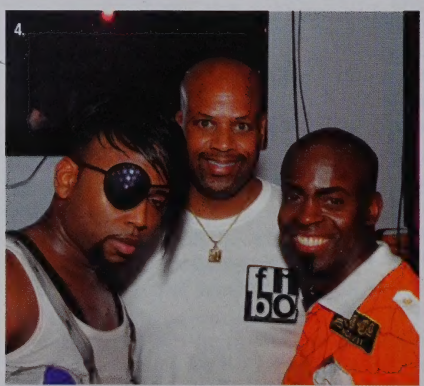
Ebony Pyramid Entertainment and host Rodney Chester (Alex from *Noah's Arc*) lead this adventure from the Big Easy to a new site in Mexico.
www.ebonypyramidonline.com

October 9, 2010
The Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) 14th Annual National Dinner
Washington, DC

This year's honorees include producer/director Lee Daniels and Grammy Award-winning artist Pink.
www.hrcnationaldinner.org

ON THE SCENE





Washington, D.C.'s White Attire Affair HIV awareness fundraiser and Fire Island BlackOut beach party.

1. Host Rayceen Pendarvis and friend. 2. White Attire Affair guests. 3. SWERV co-publisher Jamil Fletcher with stylist Yardé Noir and friends. 4. Recording artist Ton3x, FIBO staff member James, GLO Network's Maurice Jamal. 5. FIBO guests arriving at the beach. 6. FIBO event.

Tell us about your event! E-mail us at info@swervmag.com.

QUEER BLACK CINEMA INSTITUTE AND
GAY MEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT PRESENTS
3 ANNUAL
QUEER BLACK CINEMA
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL
2010
October 14 - 17, 2010
Dr Barbara Ann Teer's National Black Theatre
2031 5th Ave Btwn 125 & 126 Streets Harlem, NY
FILMS | WORKSHOPS | PANELS | PARTIES | AWARD CEREMONY
QBCNYC.org
qbcfilmseries@yahoogroups.com
FOUNDING SPONSOR
OUR STORIES PRODUCTIONS
PRESENTED BY
GMAD
Gay Men of African Descent
SPONSORS
swerv magazine
CINEMATIQ
DPVN
Egg UP
QBC TV
THE STORY OF PEACE
Grant provided by
Astraea Lesbian Foundation
and community contributions

GILEAD
Updated guidelines* include starting HIV medicines at 500 or less T-cells.
I had my own thoughts
about when I should start treatment.
Now I know, for me
TREATING HIV SOONER, IS BETTER.

Considering HIV treatment earlier may improve your chances of living a healthier life. Starting HIV medicines when your T-cell count is 500 or less is one of several factors to consider, because it may help preserve your immune system and possibly avoid some long-term complications. Talk to your doctor today about a plan that may lead to a longer, healthier life.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP. GO TO

hivtreatmentispower.com

* Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

HIV TREATMENT IS POWER

© 2010 Gilead Sciences, Inc.
All rights reserved. UN5214 07/10